NEW MASSES

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WALL STREET, D.C.

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NEW MASSES

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WALL ST., D. C.

By THE EDITORS

THE stock market lunged upward the other day to the highest levels in nine to fifteen years. Steel and motors led the way. Maybe you are one of the 130,000,000 Americans who don't own any stocks and don't give a hoot what happens to them. Yet the stock market frenzy is part of your headache, part of what the corporate rulers of America are trying to do to your bread and butter and your meager rights.

"Inflationary psychology ruled completely the tenor of the trading," wrote the New York *Times*. The Wall Street boom is the prelude to the Main Street bust. The harvest of profits is hastening the harvest of hunger even though the reckoning may be delayed a couple of years. Behind the bull market is the big business drive to smash price control; in turn the inflation of investments in American industry, enlarging the maw that must be filled with profits, intensifies the pressure on prices and the resistance to wage increases.

Steel prices must go up "greatly in excess" of $6.25 a ton, insists Irving S. Olds, chairman of Morgan's US Steel, before the company will grant its workers an 18½ cents an hour increase to compensate in part for the reduction of take-home pay. And if steel goes up, every article containing steel will also rise. Henry Ford II demands the removal of price controls on all materials used to make automobiles and parts. The meat trust refuses to budge on higher wages for underpaid employes unless prices are substantially hiked. And at last it is publicly admitted that in an effort to force up prices, 400,000 men's suits and 3,000,000 shirts are being held in manufacturers' warehouses while millions of demobilized veterans and civilians hunt in vain for clothing.

THE ticker tape spells out only part of this conspiracy. Another part is being spelled out in Congress and in various government agencies. Without holding hearings, a reactionary bloc of nothern Republicans and southern poll-tax Democrats last week rammed through by a two-to-one vote a rule bringing the Case anti-labor bill to the floor. This vicious bill may pass the House this week. According to Rep. Vito Marcantonio, the Case bill "repeals the Norris-La Guardia anti-injunction act and vitiates the National Labor Relations Act."

What is the Truman administration doing in this situation? To say that key government figures are encouraging the reckless big business assault and urging supine appeasement is to put it mildly. It is well known that President Truman's right-hand man, the St. Louis banker, John W. Snyder, director of War Mobilization and Reconversion, has become the chief agent of Big Steel in its quest for more money out of the nation's pocketbook. The administration has in fact already agreed to a price rise; the only unsettled question is how much. And just the other day Civilian Production Administrator Small made a plea for increases.

President Truman himself behaves like a man who tiptoes into a room in which murder and mayhem are being committed, and whispers: "Pardon me, I forgot my rubbers." The real strategy of our government is revealed in a Washington dispatch by Joseph and Stewart Alsop (New York *Herald Tribune*, February 1): "Today the Truman line is to keep labor in the Democratic column, if possible, but to grant any concessions the business men really insist upon." And judging by what is happening on the international scene, this is even more completely the Truman line in foreign policy.

Up to this point this seems like a repetition of what happened after the last war. But "something new has been added." And that something is giving sleepless nights to certain men in Wall Street and Washington. Paramount is the new strength and militancy of labor, whose vanguard is the CIO. This time the unions are not being driven back in disorder by the combined forces of the employers and the government, as was the case in 1919. They are standing up to the monopolists, compelling some of them like Ford and Chrysler to grant their demands even before the larger strike movement has gained its objectives.

And something else that's completely new is happening: the picket lines are becoming bonds between labor and all other groups whom monopoly is trying to beat down. NEW MASSES has in recent issues given vivid pictures of this tremendous development: Lillian Stone's account of the outpouring of small business support for the Yale & Towne strikers in Stamford, Conn.; Richard O. Boyer's story of what Homestead, Pa.'s merchants feel about the steel strike, of the action of the Clairton, Pa., city government in voting $50,000 for strike relief; Millen Brand's report on the pro-labor attitude of trades people in Bethlehem. There are many more examples.

They add up. Right now they add up to support for the economic struggles of the workers. But these struggles have their political implications too. The growing nationwide support for the strikers is potentially the nucleus of a powerful political movement that must before long take the form of an independent party. On the picket line and in the polling booth labor and its allies can meet the challenge of the big business plunderbund and make themselves a new destiny.

And larger issues emerge. Why should the main arteries of the nation's economic life remain in private hands and be exploited for private gain? Isn't it time for the government to move, as a number of European governments are doing, to take over as public property such vital enterprises as steel, banking, railroads, auto, coal, etc.? Provided this nationalization is carried through under democratic controls it can help break the strangehold of the trusts and provide more effective means of coping with a new depression.

All over the world and in our country too the people are moving ahead. Moving, whether they know it or not, away from the barbarism that is capitalism and toward the first civilized society, socialism. This society in Russia has demonstrated that only life without capitalists can make possible for the people liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Meanwhile there are immediate jobs to do, and the very first —for professionals, farmers, small businessmen, veterans, no less than for workers—is to kill the Case bill.

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OUR COMMON STRUGGLE

NEGRO HISTORY WEEK acquires more than usual significance this year. The war against fascism released pent-up democratic wills everywhere; yet, though the military core of fascism's menace was shattered in the Axis lands, its political, social and ideological remnants have not been extirpated. Nor are they exterminated in the lands that won the military victory. In Europe fascism was closely allied to the feudal survivals of the Dark Ages. In America, in a large measure, it is the evil legacy of the slave-market. One of the great wartime democratic victories symbolized in the FEPC is threatened, as we go to press, by a Senate filibuster which shames our people in the eyes of the world. The moribund class of Southern poll-taxers would turn the clock of history back to the pre-civil war days. The evil of their slave-market psychology has spread to our institutions of higher learning, where efforts are made to close the doors to the Negro youth as well as Jew and Catholic.

Like all history, Negro history is being enriched with new gains in the course of the common struggles of all democratic Americans. In this issue NEW MASSES strives to picture some of the many-sided aspects of the fight against discrimination as well as some of the many-sided aspects of the gains. The articles by Charles Evans and Herbert Aptheker are irrefutable proof that the ramparts of racism can be shattered in the common struggle for democratic ends: and that in shattering racism we can build that enduring unity of all democrats that alone can complete the liberating tasks Abraham Lincoln could not carry out when his life was ended by the assassin.

We present two pages of photographs, reproduced from the Negro weekly the *People's Voice*, which reflect the occasion sponsored by NM several weeks ago honoring the champions of equality, the outstanding warriors for Negro rights. (See pages 16 and 17.) From this gathering we also publish two of the addresses, those of Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and Joseph North.

Left, Harriet Tubman. Upper right, Negro Worker. Sketches for murals by Charles White.

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I FOUGHT IN A MIXED BATTALION

By CHARLES EVANS

THE dying flames were visible before we reached the top of the last hill. It had been a long, cold ride. We had mounted tanks at dusk, more than fifty miles in the rear. So this was the front! Our first night as a mixed unit was spent in taking a town that no longer existed. Only the crackling flames told of the enemy's resistance. Our artillery and bombs had been enough.

The day before, the chaplain greeted us along with 200 other reinforcements. Assigned to Company A, we constituted the fifth platoon. Although the degree of integration was one of platoon strength, this was not rigid and primarily served the purpose of administration.

The disposition of troops under fire was completely without regard to color. The fifth platoon (colored) was generally teamed with the first platoon (white); with the second and third platoons together and the fourth platoon providing overhead fire with light machine-guns and mortars.

Outside of a certain curiosity as to why anyone should volunteer for the front, there was no unusual reaction to us as reinforcements. It seems on the front one isn't so particular about the color of a man's skin after all. While a few of the nearly 200 white soldiers, representing as they did a real cross-section of America, may have resented fighting with Negroes, there was no visible manifestation of this feeling. The fact that during the entire period we fought and lived together without a single incident speaks for itself.

As a matter of fact, the highest degree of teamwork and fraternity was reached and maintained throughout hostilities. For example, on our second night we had a small town as our objective. Supported by artillery and four tanks, the first and fifth platoon were to spearhead from left and right until they joined forces at a given point just short of town. Our officer impressed us with the importance of reaching our objective on time (that is, before our artillery lifted). If we met resistance we were to take up a "line of marching fire." Almost within our own lines we were pinned down by a terrific crossfire from enemy machine-guns. It would have been but a matter of minutes before the enemy could zero their artillery and mortars on us. We had been shelled all day. Our radio had lost connections, my assistant squad leader was killed, the platoon scattered and frozen to the ground. A tank, seeing our desperation, drove forward directly in the face of enemy fire and destroyed the machine-gun nest. The tank commander was a white Southerner. To appreciate the real gallantry of our tankers, one must understand that in many circumstances they were not only not expected to expose their tanks to such danger, but were frequently restrained. There were two prime motivations for their actions: first, to save as many lives as possible while liquidating the enemy, and second, they had a supreme confidence in our ability to protect them from the deadly bazookas. The fact that we were Negroes neither dampened their enthusiasm

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for the former nor lessened their faith in the latter.

Mention must be made of the conduct of our white medics; wherever we met resistance they were at our side, with complete disregard for their own safety. They gave us assurance as well as a guarantee of the most immediate attention.

There are other examples of comradeship too numerous to recount. We ate from the same mess gear, slept in the same houses—when we slept; we drank buzz bomb juice from the same bottle feeling lucky to drink at all.

It was common knowledge that the fourth platoon soon preferred the fifth to lead an attack because of our "unrestrained aggressiveness." This respect was reciprocal. As I said, the fourth platoon shot over our heads. Because of the terrain of proximity of the enemy, they often had to fire much too close for comfort. Yet we trusted them as we would our own brothers.

Peace gave us leisure and a further chance to develop personal friendships and mutual interests among us. After a hard day's work doing nothing, small groups of Negroes and white could be seen everywhere singing and chewing the rag.

Reflecting this spirit even more were our company athletics. Three of the eight first-team volley ball players were Negroes, including the assistant manager. In baseball, the most popular sport of all, nearly half of the first-team players were Negroes. The ace catcher was a Negro, the pitcher was a white Southerner. When we swam and bathed at all, we did so together. There were frequent dances held by both our company and battalion with no sign of racial friction. The more military aspects of the company ran as smoothly. It was not unusual to see a Negro in charge of a detail of mixed or white personnel. This was especially true of guard, our main occupation.

On my way home I was able to exchange experiences with Negroes from other units. And for nearly three weeks I was in Alabama with over 200 others awaiting a discharge. No one spoke of an unfriendly atmosphere in any of the mixed units.

Surely the lie that Negro and white can't live and fight together has been finally, completely and forever refu'ed.

WHAT THE WHITE TROOPS THOUGHT

By HERBERT APTHEKER

A PARTICULARLY outstanding and unique event in the modern history of American Negro-white relations occurred in the waging of the war against fascism, but its results remain largely unpublicized. During the last two-and-a-half months of the fighting, Negro-white mixed combat infantry companies were employed widely in the European theater. What are the facts concerning this experiment?

The winter of 1944-45 witnessed considerable attrition in the number of American front-line troops facing the Germans. There were several causes, among which may be mentioned the Ardennes counter-offensive of the Nazis, and the bitter weather, creating considerable casualties. These facts, taken together with the Supreme Command's determination to deliver an overall, crushing, final asault along the Western Front, led to the consideration of means of replenishing our forces.

[illegible]f these means—adopted as a [illegible]—was to tap the communica[illegible]ne for personnel. We know now that by this time—January-February 1945—the war had but a short time to last. But up front there was no certainty of this. Hard fighting was in progress and, to put it mildly, it was rather unpleasant that winter on the line.

Yet when the call went out for volunteers, regardless of color, several thousand Negro men offered their services. Of these 2,600 were accepted as having the necessary qualifications, given six weeks' intensive training (under the officers and non-commissioned officers who were to lead them in fighting) and in March they began, personally, to kill Nazis. A point especially worth noting, though often overlooked, is the fact that these men in volunteering to join front-line units relinquished any ratings they might have had, and accepted the grade of private.

The organizational setup, generally, was this: the Negroes were formed into a separate rifle platoon, officered by whites, and this platoon was superimposed on the normal company complement of one heavy weapons platoon plus three rifle platoons. One of these Negro platoons entered each of the three infantry regiments of a division. This was done within eleven veteran infantry divisions, most notably in the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 69th, 78th, 99th and 104th.

There are four basic questions that come to mind in connection with this. First, how did the receiving units feel about the Negro reinforcements when they first arrived? Second, how did the Negro troops conduct themselves while fighting alongside the whites in the same companies? Third, how did the men get along in the ultimate intimacy and comradeship of combat? Finally, did the white men of these units change their minds about the Negro after they had eaten, slept, bled and killed together?

In May and June 1945, trained Army interviewers set out to discover the answers. They questioned 250 men, the sergeants and line officers who had actually been with these Negro men in combat. Here is what they discovered:

1. *At first*, most (sixty-four percent) of the officers and non-coms did not like the idea of serving with Negroes, and only a minority were "willing to try it," or "didn't mind."

2. After fighting with Negro troops for about sixty days these men were asked: "How well did the colored soldiers perform in combat?" None replied "not well at all"; one percent of the non-coms and no officer said "not

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so well"; sixteen percent of the officers and seventeen percent of the non-coms said "fairly well"; and *eighty-four percent of the officers and eighty-one percent of the non-coms said "very well."*

3. These white men who had, on the whole, not welcomed Negroes, were asked after serving with them: "How have the white and colored soldiers got along together?" *None, not a single man, said, "not well."* Seven percent of the officers and thirty-six percent of the non-coms said, "fairly well"; and *seventy-three percent of the officers and sixty percent of the non-coms said, "very well."*

4. And when these men were asked: "Has your feeling changed since having served in the same unit with colored soldiers?" *none, not a single man, said his attitude had become less favorable,* while seventy-seven percent of the officers and non-coms said they felt more favorable towards them ("feel more respect for them," "like them better") than they had at first.

Those are the facts. These figures become more dramatic when one notes some of the actual comments made by the whites. Thus, a captain from Virginia said, "This colored platoon of thirty-five men with no prepared positions was counterattacked by ninety Germans. The platoon commander had just been captured. They killed forty-six and took thirty-five prisoners, without losing any ground or having any casualties; a first lieutenant from California, "They're the best platoon in the regiment"; another first lieutenant from Connecticut, "They are very aggressive as fighters—really good at fighting in woods and at close-quarter work. The only trouble is getting them to stop: they just keep pushing"; a platoon sergeant from Georgia, "There never has been any sign of trouble. We like them and they like us. I've got every respect for these boys"; a platoon sergeant from South Carolina, "When I heard about it, I said I'd be damned if I'd wear the same shoulder patch they did. After that first day when we saw how they fought, I changed my mind. They're just like any of the other boys to us"; a captain from California, "They just did their job and did damn well and finally the white soldiers accepted them on their own merits."

One further point: a cross-section of combat units *which had never fought with Negroes* showed that sixty-two percent said they would dislike "very much" to serve with them. But among infantrymen who *had served with them* only seven percent had this feeling,

"You and your ideas!"

thirty-two percent said they "would like it," twenty-eight percent said "just as soon have it as any other setup" (*a total of sixty percent who were favorable towards mixed companies*), and one-third said they had "rather not, but it would not matter too much."

To summarize: When Negro soldiers were placed within hitherto all-white combat units the majority of the white men resented the act and doubted its practicality. The vast majority of these originally dubious white men stated, after serving with them, that the Negroes fought "very well." It was unanimously agreed that the men got along together (fought and lived together) without trouble, and the vast majority stated they had got along together very well. And it was unanimously agreed that this experience of common effort did not result in worsened feelings, but on the contrary, over three out of every four white soldiers stated that because of it, their regard and respect for the Negro had risen.

What is outstanding here? Certainly not that these Negro men fought well. Anyone, except an ignoramus, knows that the Negro proved his capabilities as a fighter long before the recent war. No, outstanding is the additional proof

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this experience offers that "racism" is a cancer which, to exist, must be nurtured by stimulation—by a positive policy of maintaining mores, customs, laws and propaganda that serve to feed the deadly growth.

Remove these stimuli, and the blight withers. Replace them by others—as in this case by officially sanctioned fellowship, supported by explanation and action—and the poison vanishes, to be succeeded by respect and comradeship.

BOUND BY THE COLOR LINE

By W. E. B. DuBOIS

MANY friends of American Negroes would say that we tend to emphasize our problem of race above that of the more basic problems of labor, poverty and ignorance. [illegible] would reply that our [illegible] fundamentally human [illegible] underlie the broader but more abstract social problems. Nothing illustrates this better than the history of America where development of work, income and education have had the greatest field for expansion the world has ever known; and yet continually have been hindered from the progress they might have made by problems of race and color which have been, and still form, the central thread of our history.

Despite desperate efforts to rewrite and distort this history, a few of us must recall that in 1776, when three million white Americans proclaimed the equality of all men, they were at that very moment holding five hundred thousand black folk in slavery and classifying them not even as animals but as real estate. Their prosperity had been built on two centuries of this slavery and the independence which they demanded was mainly freedom to pursue this exploitation of men in raw material and in trade.

When in the War for Independence these slaves threatened to revolt to the English, the American army not only used five thousand of them to win the war but welcomed volunteers from that Haiti which for a half century afterward they refused to recognize as a [illegible]. The emancipation which was [illegible] in this use of the slave was [illegible] begun in the United States, but it was halted in 1820 when the Cotton Kingdom, based on slave labor, together with plans for vaster empires centered in the Caribbean and South America, became backbone and vision of the American economy.

For the next half century the meaning of America was not the winning of the West, nor the development of democracy, as history insists, but a bitter fight as to whether American labor was to be slave or free. It flamed into bloody Civil War: a war caused by Negro slavery and in singular paradox stopped, as Abraham Lincoln himself testified, when two hundred thousand black soldiers reinforced the North and brought emancipation of both white labor and black to a nation that had never wanted it.

Thereupon the nation was faced by the logical contradiction that unless they used slaves as voters they could not control the former slaveholders or hold the United States in permanent union. Black votes and black labor, as well as white, reconstructed the union and attempted to reconstruct democracy, but Northern capital and Southern land monopoly bound Southern labor to the chariot wheels of new free enterprise, which became powerful enough to disfranchise labor. This disfranchised labor was immediately thrown into two antagonistic competing groups by a legal caste of black folk reminiscent of the Middle Ages established by consent of the nation in the center of the twentieth century.

How in such a case could real democracy develop in this land? Remember that tonight in nine states of the Union a meeting like this would be illegal; and that in at least eight other states it would be advisable because of the danger of mob law. Remember that today you cannot in the United States either attack this basic caste or carry out social reform by legal methods because in your way there stands a bloc of 134 electoral votes based on color caste, which makes a third party movement impossible and prevents any clear-cut voting on education, economic security or health. It takes 126,000 of your votes to send a representative to Congress but it needs only 44,000 to send such a representative from the South. In Bilbo's Mississippi, 150,000 votes have the same power in the Senate as 6,000,000 votes in New York. These figures are so fantastic that most people do not know them and cannot believe them when they are stated. Yet it remains true that New York's 6,024,597 votes in 1944 elected the same number of Senators that Mississippi elected with 152,712. President Truman, backed by a majority of the voters of the nation, can implement no program of reform as long as the South, with political power based on disfranchisement and caste, can out-count the majority in the presidential election and in Congress.

Thus we Negroes insist that there can be no attack upon social problems by free democratic methods because we have neither freedom nor democracy. We have bound our own hands by the color line entrenched in the rotten boroughs of the South. By the same token the significance of America in the world is not freedom, democracy, education and economic security but rather alliance with colonial imperialism and class dictatorship in order to enforce the denial of freedom to the colored peoples of the world. Whatever may be the sentiment in this room and in this state or even in this section, we cannot tonight for a moment forget that there are millions of Americans of wealth, education and power who believe that the necessity of keeping black men from ever becoming free citizens is more important than the triumph of democracy in the world. Under such circumstances you cannot blame us if we stress, sometimes perhaps unduly, the importance of the Negro problem, not simply for ourselves but for you.

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JIM CROW IS OUR AFFAIR

By JOSEPH NORTH

IN HONORING these outstanding men and women tonight, we of NEW MASSES are honored. These are brave men, brave women, who have dared to speak the truth, and more than that, to fight for it. All honor to them. It is in their tradition that NEW MASSES seeks to carry on until racism is a dismal thing of the past, as dead as the dodo, as dead as Herr Doktor Goebbels.

I would like to speak tonight not only as an editor of NEW MASSES, but also as a Jew. As one man from America's minority peoples. As a Jew I know what prejudice is; I know what Jim Crow is; I know what lynch-law is. My grandfather was lynched in a pogrom in Czarist Russia; one of my earlier memories is a race riot in a Pennsylvania town in 1919, and one of my playmates was beaten almost to death by a Kluxer mob that took over the streets of our town. Every Negro was fair prey during those days of bloodshed. I remember that my mother, a little Jewish immigrant, ran out into the street to defend my friend, and a Kluxer put a revolver to her head: "If you weren't a woman," he said, "I'd blow your brains out." But she succeeded in rescuing the child. Later, I remember my mother was chided by a neighbor who said: "How could you do it? You, a mother of four, risking your life in something that isn't your affair." And I shall never forget her reply: "When I see a child pursued by murderers, I don't ask questions. I don't ask who is his mother. *I* am his mother."

Irene Bernstein.

YES, pogroms are our affair; Jim Crow is our affair; racism is our affair. And we dare not ask "Who is his mother?" We are all of us in this, we are all involved, whether we are Negro or white, Jew or Gentile. And what happens to the most obscure, the most humble among us, affects all of us.

The memory of these things was one of the major factors that brought me to the working-class movement, and to the Marxist movement. The knowledge of these things motivates all of us on NEW MASSES, inspires us to battle for democracy, against the horrors of race superiority. For we know how close the lynching in the South is to Maidanek and Dachau. We know the kinship of Bilbo's ideas to Hitler's ideas. And we know that only the unity of all democrats can prevail against these ever-present dangers.

I want to say a word here tonight not only against the outright lynchers, the unmasked fascists; I want to speak, too, against the subtle lynchers, the masqueraded enemy. I have here a copy of this week's issue of *Time*. Now Mr. Henry Luce is a polished gentleman, a publisher who rates high in Dun and Bradstreet and in journalistic circles generally.

But I want to say something about the core of this man, the soul of his publications. All of us have read about the Morgan incident—Lieut. General Sir Frederick Edgworth Morgan, who spoke of the Polish Jews in these terms: "They certainly do not look like persecuted people. They are well-dressed, well-fed, rosy-cheeked, and have plenty of money. . . . I believe they have a plan . . . to get out of Europe. . . ." And Mr. Luce came to Lieut. General Sir Frederick Edgworth Morgan's defense: "That did it. Professional protesters cleared their throats and gave tongue. . . . Prominent Jews shrieked. . . . Comedian Eddie Cantor bought two full columns of advertising space in the New York *Times* (price $660) to shout in twelve-point type: "Hitler Has Come Back to Life." And after a full column of further streamlined calumny, Mr. Luce declares: "*As they often did, the Jews were doing their cause considerable damage by their loud and violent outcries. . . .*" Now I have been around long enough to recognize that sentiment. When you hear it know it as the earmark of the slick up-to-date anti-Semite. It is always the counsel they give the oppressed minority. "Don't talk up; don't talk back; you're hurting your cause." The gospel of meekness and submission lies within that sentiment. Unfortunately, too many Jews were imbued with that sentiment, and history has given us a horrible lesson. Mr. Luce asks the Jew to be silent, to be polite, when seven millions of his people have been exterminated. We get the same counsel concerning Jim Crow, lynch-law, racism in America.

But we on NEW MASSES will not keep quiet. We join with our fellows here tonight in lifting our voices. We have lifted our voices through the years. It was NM, back in 1934, that was first among weekly magazines to throw the spotlight on the shirted movements of America; we have carried on throughout the years. Many of you here know of the many issues of NM that have warned, that have explained, that have stumped for programs of unity against the common enemy. I thumbed through some back copies today and at random I can cite the articles by Franz Boas, "The Myth of Race"; by Captain Herbert Aptheker, "Distorting the Negro's History"; by Louis E. Martin, editor of the *Michigan Chronicle*, "The Curse of Racism"; the special issues we have carried on the Negro and the war, in which we find such names as Carl Murphy, Alain Locke, Charles A. Collins, Prof. F. O. Matthiessen, William Henry Huff, Mark Van Doren, Ben Davis, Paul Robeson, Ferdinand C. Smith, Hulan E. Jack, and others too numerous to name.

NEW MASSES will carry on this fight in the spirit shown here tonight.

Some writers have risked, and are risking, their lives to get the low-down on fascism's plans: many of you may

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have read the recent articles by Dorothy Roberts, who sent us first-hand reports from within the Klan, warning of its rebirth. Her article in the November 7 issue forewarned that the Klan was gathering its strength in the South once again, and the next week we read that a fifty-foot cross burned on the hill above Atlanta.

All this is part of the day-to-day work of NEW MASSES writers and artists. They reject Henry Luce's advice that says, minority peoples do their "cause damage by their loud and violent outcries. . . ." Let Mr. Luce's tender sensibilities be outraged by our "loud and violent outcries."

Has he ever heard the outcries of the lynched? Did he hear the outcries of the seven million burned in the Dachaus and Buchenwalds of Europe? And if he had heard, how much would it matter to this exponent of the American century, of unbridled Yankee imperialism?

No, we shall not be silent until the job is done; until the democratic unity of black and white, of labor and the middle classes, of Jew and Gentile has been achieved. That is the way to victory. That is the only way.

MEET GOVERNOR HASTIE

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington.

OUT Georgia Avenue, at the top of the hill, lies Howard University. The campus is spread out over city blocks, but once you enter the buildings it is like any university; the city is left behind, and you walk along, tranquil, the world of strikes and struggle, atom bomb and filibuster, remote. It is like any university in appearance—except that the faces you see are brown and black and almost-white, but none of them white. They are beautiful, alive faces. You keep thinking of them as you sit in the outer office waiting to see Dean Hastie.

The typewriter keys of secretaries click away neatly in the ordered calm of the Dean's outer office. But if the cloistered air was lulling and inviting, it did not last for long. It took about three words from the Dean to make you realize these academic walls were simply not there for him, and that he never allowed them to shut out the heart of the struggle in America, the great fight to liberate the Negro people.

A FEW days earlier I had been hearing Sen. John H. Overton, a bulbous, porky gentleman with features lost in flesh, who rarely does anything but sleep in the Senate, mouthing the word, "nigger," saying he would not put one alongside the "young ladies" in his office.

The *Congressional Directory* declares the Senator to be: "member of Sigma Nu and Phi Kappa Phi fraternities, [illegible] and Protective Order of [illegible]ic order, Knights Templar, [illegible]ar Association, Sons of the American Revolution, and Society of the Cincinnati." Put alongside that one small section of William Henry Hastie's biography: "President, Amherst Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, 1925; member, editorial staff of *Harvard Law Review*, 1928-30; National Achievement award of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, 1939; honorary degree, Master of Arts, Amherst College, 1940; Spingarn Medal, 1943." And to that can be added his recent appointment as governor of the Virgin Islands.

Rep. John Rankin is recorded as a graduate from "the legal department" of the University of Mississippi, but Sen. James O. Eastland merely "attended the University of Mississippi, Vanderbilt University and the University of Alabama; . . . studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1927, and commenced practice in Forest, Miss." These "gentlemen from Mississippi" are among the Congress' most notorious "white supremacists."

Here are the degrees of the dean of the Howard University law school: A.B., Amherst College; LL.B. and S.J.D., Harvard University. He is also vice president, National Lawyers Guild, and chairman of the legal committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and on the editorial boards of the *Lawyers Guild Review* and the *National Bar Journal*. He's vice president of the Washington Committee for the Southern Conference on Human Welfare and holds the same office in the Washington Council for Community Planning.

Dean Hastie talks about the big battle that is on.

"There isn't a community in the country where the Fair Employment Practice Committee isn't being talked about," he said. "I remember when President Roosevelt issued the original order. I was in Houston, at an NAACP convention. Some of us lawyers were sitting around discussing the terms of the order. We were able to see then that an agency without enforcement powers would do some good but could not make any basic improvement. What we did not see, did not dream of, was that in five years there would be a public drive for a permanent FEPC of the kind that we see in progress now. Even when the Scanlon bill for a permanent FEPC was introduced in January 1944, I was skeptical that enough drive would develop." And as he spoke of the tremendous job of organizing public sentiment that had been achieved, comparable to no other mobilization behind a single piece of legislation since the Wagner act, his handsome, youthful face lit up. I could not help contrasting it to Overton's. Instead of features which ran together, his were chiseled. Instead of pudgy hands, his were lean, long-fingered. At forty-one, this man has been assistant solicitor of the United States Department of Interior, judge of the District Court of the Virgin Islands, and since 1942 a member of the President's Caribbean Advisory Committee.

But he has not let these honors seduce him from the main task ahead. And after all the sugaring up at the hands of the Roosevelt administration, he resigned as civilian aide to the Secretary of War in 1943, when he could no longer stomach Jim Crow in the armed forces.

When he took the position in 1940, a position created for him, he understood that the Army really meant to do away with Jim Crow. When he resigned, it was with a public blast. I asked him about it, whether it did not take courage to make his decision, whether people didn't advise against it. No, he said simply, it didn't take courage "because I wasn't faced with

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"Working Woman," lithograph by M. Oley.

hunger." He had his job at the university waiting for him. And he didn't tell anyone what he was going to do so he didn't have to worry about advisers. "I had just reached the end of my usefulness there," he said. "I was more useful outside the War Department than in from that point on."

Ironically enough, now that the war is over there are some signs that the Army may make the changes he fought for, he said. He bases this on what has leaked out from the Gillem committee report (discussing the survey of the mixed battalion detailed by Herbert Aptheker on page 6). He has his fingers crossed, but at least there is "some hope that for the first time the Army will come out with a forthright statement on a decent policy towards Negroes."

So far as the civilian population is concerned, Dean Hastie feels that Negroes "gained tremendously during the war in employment—whether it is transitory I don't know." But they also gained much in militancy, he said. "And if they keep that, that will mean jobs."

Whatever Dean Hastie touched on in our conversation, he always came back to jobs. Hard as it is to mobilize support behind two bills at once, he points out, "you have to take FEPC and full employment together." An overconfidence on the part of the Negro people exists, he believes, as to what FEPC can accomplish without full employment.

ONE of his greatest victories in the many struggles Dean Hastie has carried on in the practice of his profession was the Texas white primary case, which he argued in the Supreme Court. The court, in April 1944, affirmed the right of Negroes to vote in the Texas primaries, which settle the election in Texas.

Next month he will argue another case before the Supreme Court which may make history: the case of Morgan vs. the state of Virginia, which the court just last week agreed to review. The Supreme Court of Virginia previously upheld a lower court in ruling that the state laws did apply to interstate commerce, and that it was perfectly legal to eject Mrs. Morgan, a Negro, from a bus passing through Virginia when she refused to move to a seat in the rear. Only two decisions on cases even remotely similar have been handed down, both prior to 1900.

In the leading case on the unconstitutionality of discrimination in teachers' salaries—also in the benighted state of Virginia, where your correspondent and thousands of other Washington workers pay a poll tax in order to vote—Dean Hastie won a victory. The Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, then sitting at Asheville, N. C., held against the school board, in the famous case of Alston vs. the Norfolk School Board, and when the other side appealed, the Supreme Court refused to review it. This was in 1941.

One of the most challenging cases he has championed, however, is that of Mays vs. Burgess. Mrs. Clara Mays was ejected from her home in Washington, a home which she owned, because of a restrictive covenant, an agreement that no Negroes would be allowed to move into the neighborhood. Here, as Robert Minor pointed out in the *Daily Worker*, even the sacred right of private property was flouted. The District Court ordered her to vacate her

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house, and the Court of Appeals affirmed it. The Supreme Court then refused to review it, with Justices Frank Murphy and Wiley Rutledge dissenting, and Justices Robert Jackson (who was in Europe) and Stanley F. Reed taking no part. Justice Hugo Black, who is virtually always on the progressive side when the court is divided, voted with the majority. "Restrictive covenants are funny," mused Dean Hastie. "A man can be fine on job discrimination, on segregation in buses, on almost everything—but he must keep his home 'pure' against Negroes, or Jews. No contamination." He smiled. "It is one of the most acute problems of suburban life. In Chicago, Washington, Baltimore, St. Louis. And Los Angeles is one of the most critical cities: Negroes are crowded there into a tiny section. Of course in all of these cities the slums are as a result unspeakable, and rent exorbitant. Real estate operators are of course a big factor, in Chicago and everywhere."

BUT how did he get that way, I asked Judge Hastie. What had his childhood been, and when did he first feel that there was no life for him apart from the struggle of his people?

"Well, of course I wasn't born this way," he answered. "I didn't intend even to be a lawyer, but a civil engineer, and I majored in the natural sciences and mathematics. Then I ran out of money and I went out and taught math in high school in New Jersey for two years.

"But you can't be a Negro in America without more and more concerning yourself with the problems of human relationships. It is the same with my friends—doctors, scientists, all. As a member of an oppressed minority group you can't stay out of the struggle. Sooner or later you're engulfed in the maelstrom of social conflict—unless," he laughed, "you have the skin of a rhinocerous. Or unless you just go from laboratory to home, say—and even then you must come in contact with the world, and you must feel the discrimination."

As for his childhood—well, there was the matter of the horse and buggy. He knew why his parents kept the horse and buggy, and why he had a bicycle to ride to school on. He can't remember a time when he didn't know why.

It was in Knoxville, Tenn., which has a unique history. There was a Union garrison there, and many Union sympathizers settled in Knoxville. In the Civil War eastern Tennessee sent large numbers of volunteers to fight on the Union side, while the western half of the state sent large numbers of volunteers to the Confederate army. Eastern Tennessee to this day has never sent a Democrat to Congress. When he was a child, there were Negro policemen in Knoxville. But there was segregation on streetcars. And the proud, race-conscious Hastie family never rode on those streetcars. Young William played with white boys exclusively when he came home from school, as the family lived on the edge of town and was the only colored family living there. But the schools also were segregated, so there was this sharp cleavage. During the school day he was with Negroes. Then he came home and forgot there were such things as color bars—or almost forgot.

At any rate, until he was twelve years old, he "never got a defeatist sense about American life and the Negro's part in it."

Then, when he was twelve, they moved to Washington. And except for the lack of segregation on streetcars, he

Sing Freedom

(Excerpts from a Mass Chant with Music)

1619-1864

Out of their sorrow and their tears,
Out of their flesh and blood and bone,
They built America through the years,
They left their mark on every stone,
On every road,
On every tree,
On every bale of cotton grown,
On every dark tobacco sheaf,
On every blade,
On every leaf,
On every patch of earth throughout the South,
And always one word "Freedom" on their lips,
And "Freedom" in their hearts,
And "Freedom" in their eyes.

Prophecy

But the bright harvest of the future
Has not been lost,
Only halted by an early frost,
And the golden seeds lie in the ground,
And there is a growing sound,
And the roots reach into the earth
And take a firmer hold,
There will be rebirth
In the same mould,
And root and leaf and flower
Will burst into radiance,
Will tower into Southern skies
Without a shadow,
And men will walk
Head high,
Freedom in their eyes,
For men may die for Freedom,
But Freedom never dies.

LEWIS ALLAN.

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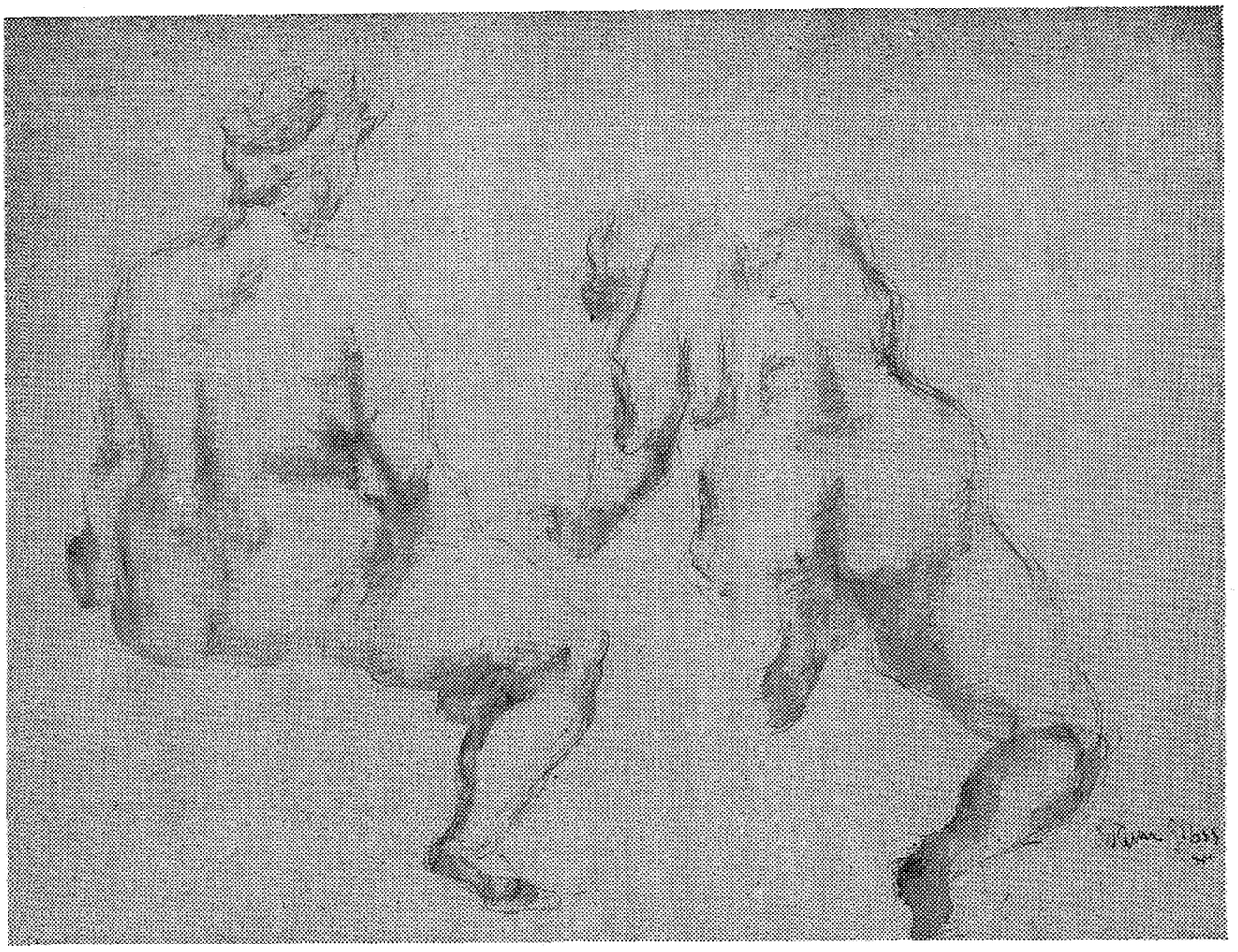

Pen and brush sketch by Chaim Gross.

was in the South—more so than in Knoxville in spite of this difference. Even in recent years, with all his honors and distinction as a noted public citizen, Judge Hastie has felt the stings of discrimination. There was the time, although he did not mention it, when I. F. Stone of *The Nation* and *PM* invited Judge Hastie to be his guest at luncheon in the National Press Club. Then they were told they could not be served.

"AND what do you see as the prospects for America?" he was asked.

"If we had plenty of time," he replied, "I would not worry. We would see in fifty years a tremendous change. But we don't have fifty years.

"If America is going to be in any way effective in international decisions involving the basic problems of human society, she has got to put her own house in order very fast," he said. "Why, what happened to Secretary Byrnes when he injected himself and this country into the Bulgarian situation was natural. It was so logical that the comment would be made that we should put South Carolina in order before we interfered in Bulgaria.

"If it were possible to conceive," he went on, "of America by herself, then we might experience a period of very serious fascist reaction within a short time—though democratic forces might beat it in the long run. But the lines are being set up so rapidly all over the world that it is not a question where America will stand in fifty years, but where America stands today, and will stand tomorrow. And our nation is the only one sufficiently prosperous, untouched by the war, to be of real help in the struggle for democracy over the world—if we are so minded. If we go over to the side of reaction, it would set the world back for a long time—and a bloody time."

Next to the battle for FEPC, Judge Hastie thinks the drive for the franchise in the South the most important struggle now going on. "It will mean making the inarticulate, unorganized majority in the South, white and colored, an active and effective part of life in their community," he said.

He talked briefly about the keen interest in race relations now felt in drama and literature, and how the publishers now realize they have a market "even for a poor book" on the subject. "Why, it's always been the most dramatic subject in the world, but the theater shut it out. It was something you weren't supposed to drag out into the open. It shows that at last the American people have become adult enough to talk about interracial relations."

"Of course," he was reminded, "Senator Russell of Georgia, filibustering the other day, said the South didn't mind giving the Negro economic equality. Why, he said, he could show you a poor white man for every poor colored man in Georgia." The Dean threw back his head and laughed. "That's right," he said. "They treat them all alike, poor white and Negro—they treat them equally badly."

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MATTER OF FACT . . . by LEWIS MERRILL

JOHN L.'S MANEUVRE

IN DAYS gone by John L. Lewis used to speak with sonorous contempt of the AFL Executive Council and its Miami, Fla. meetings "far from the struggles of the workers." It's a neat piece of symbolism that it was at Miami that the Executive Council welcomed him back with a special dinner in his honor, to which the greying Lewis graciously responded by handing Bill Green a membership card in the United Mine Workers of America, out of which he was booted in 1938.

The newspapers have been gleefully reporting the step-by-step return of Lewis. They see a body blow being delivered to trade union unity. They openly urge the AFL to launch an all-out attack on the CIO now. To help grease the way, their lickspittle journalists have been falling over themselves to describe how fearsome is Lewis' power. They hope thus to terrorize and paralyze their intended victims.

Certainly the overpowering need in America is for unity of the working class and in the first instance the organic unity of the trade union movement. It is a truism that the employers never unite except on the program of its most reactionary sections, while the working class can unite only on the program of its most progressive sections.

Obviously, therefore, the employers, who are united today as they have not been for more than fifteen years, require as a precondition for the enactment of their program thoroughgoing division of the workers. They had high hopes until the present series of strikes that they might crush the CIO. But the CIO has emerged as the triumphant leader of the working class with solid support in the middle classes and the farmers. Now the employers as part of their strategy are egging on the AFL to do their work for them. As usual, their appeals do not fall on deaf ears. It's nasty work but there are men in the AFL who love it. But they are reckoning without their own membership whose interests are served by the CIO's program.

The employers, I think, are less concerned at the moment with the present strikes than the ones they intend to provoke in the future. The next time they will try to isolate the CIO or its individual unions and do everything they can in order to divide them from the rest of the community. They are determined to evade the basic demand of the people that the enormous productive capacity created during the war be used to raise living standards. The wage program of the CIO, calling for increasing wages without increasing prices, implements this basic demand. To satisfy it monopoly industry and finance would have to lay aside their plans to guarantee "stable" markets and high profits for themselves regardless of what happens to everyone else. The increased prices granted the employers has already set the stage for inflation and, if permitted, will in a matter of months wipe out the wage gains for which labor is now fighting.

picket line, of course, is not the full answer. Organ-
tical action never stood out so clearly as indispensable
workers and the fight for a people's program. Both rest on unity in action of the labor movement. And that's where John L. Lewis and the AFL Executive Council come in. The employers are simply calling up their reserves for the second stage of the battle.

BUT the AFL workers have something to say, too. Events have not left them untouched and the maneuvres of their cynical leadership become clearer to them every day. The fight of the CIO's unions has stirred them deeply and they will not long remain idle. They realize that the question of their wages is being decided in the steel, auto, electrical and meatpacking strikes. They will prove quite intractable if the AFL imperils their chances for wage increases and higher living standards.

Basically, the Lewis-Executive Council merger is a sign of growing weakness, not growing strength. They are going to find it tough going indeed to lead the AFL membership in an anti-democratic direction.

All the more reason why the fight for trade union unity must be revived, and quickly. The CIO must take the initiative. Frequently in the past, local CIO organizations have been discouraged too easily at rebuffs from the AFL or have assumed because the breach between the top leaderships was widening that the conditions were not favorable to organize joint actions on key issues.

Stamford is, of course, the glorious exception. But the AFL members support the CIO strike and are demonstrating on an ever-wider scale that they understand the CIO is fighting for them too. Stamford provides in its own way a

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model. But in addition to joint actions, the key question of organic unity itself must be raised with equal fearlessness and determination. The leaders of the people's movements too must lend more assistance and help to organize support for the fight for trade union unity. Trade union unity is essential in solving the nation's problems and must not be allowed to be vest-pocketed by a handful of malevolent men on the Executive Council.

Trade union unity will be brought about in the course of struggle. Major and growing struggles, political and economic, lie ahead. No small part in deciding the outcome will be played by the fight for trade union unity itself. Out of testings and the travail being imposed upon the workers there will emerge, I am sure of it, a united labor movement. When that happens these employers who think themselves almighty God will sing a different tune in our America.

A SEED FINDS ITS SOIL

By MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

I THINK it was Lenin who said that when masses take hold of an idea, it becomes power. I am hoping the same holds true for NEW MASSES. On January 1, 1944, *Morning Freiheit* published a column of mine entitled, "Why Not a Jewish History Week?" Time passed, I personally devoted myself more and more to the study of American Jewish history, but I heard no answer to my question.

Then, on November 27, 1945, NEW MASSES appeared with a rousing editorial proposing a campaign for an annual Jewish History Week, to be observed in educational institutions, in the press, and in the trade unions and other organizations of the people. That such a program is not visionary is proved by the success Negro History Week has had in recent years, with the New York City Council officially endorsing it and with the New York City Board of Education instructing all its teachers to observe the week by teaching the history of the American Negro. I am looking forward to the real campaign that I believe the revitalized NEW MASSES is well capable of conducting.

NEW MASSES sharply defines the task of organizing such a week as a political necessity and not as a cultural luxury. The editors see it not as "a question of acquiring academic knowledge or even of doing justice to a minority group" but "rather of expanding the arsenal against anti-Semitism and fascism." Scientific knowledge of a people's past can be both a guide and a goad to action now.

An important aspect of the promulgation of such a Jewish History Week would be that it would not only stimulate the consumption of Jewish history by American Jews and non-Jews, but it would also spur the production of it. Only one who has seriously tried to study American Jewish history, for instance, knows the great difficulties involved. The proper foundations for American Jewish historiography have not yet been laid. Even after more than fifty years of work by the American Jewish Historical Society there are huge gaps in our available knowledge, large areas that have hardly been investigated. The field requires the sustained attention of a much larger body of scholars and students than has yet been attracted to it before we shall know as much about American Jewish history as we know about American history in general. Participation in a Jewish History Week would undoubtedly draw the attention of more scholars to such work.

My own recent researches in the field lead me to enter this word of caution about the way in which a Jewish History Week should be celebrated. Of course we wish to bring into the foreground the progressive traditions of the Jews, so that this knowledge can equip us to repel the current attacks of those Jews who today align themselves with forces of reaction, thereby harming the American people in general and the Jews in particular. But the fact that there are reactionary sections of American Jews today, tied up with imperialist circles and ideologies, should at least suggest that in the past too the progressive Jews had to fight not only against American reactionary forces in general but against those Jews who connected themselves with reaction. An objective, scientific, Marxist analysis would regard it as an axiom that the material conditions in which the Jews live will be decisive in governing their conduct. Such an approach would shun the "idealist" apologetics which assume in some cases that everything Jews do is praiseworthy, or, in other cases, that one should give only passing mention to actions which are not praiseworthy. Such apologetics falsify history and make it barren by removing from it the prime element of struggle, the very motive force of history.

Specifically, for instance, in 1776 most Jews supported the revolution; there were also those Jews who fought it. And in England apparently most Jews supported the King. At about the time that, in New York, the Jewish congregation headed by Rabbi Gershon Mendes Seixas was deciding by a majority vote to close the synagogue and leave New York so as not to live under and collaborate with the British occupation, the Jews of London were holding special services on December 13, 1776, in which sentiments like the following were expressed: "We Thy servants pray before Thee today for our master the King against the American Provinces which rebelled against their King and refused to acknowledge his rule according to the law and custom of the Kingdom." The significant thing to understand in this picture is this: that the majority of American Jews, by joining with the majority of Americans in taking up arms against the King and his Jewish and non-Jewish supporters on both sides of the Atlantic, were able to strike a blow for the freedom of all Americans and all Jews, even though some Americans and some Jews did not understand or desire that outcome at the time. Such historical lessons can be vital, and a Jewish History Week, by spreading them, can indeed be a weapon against fascism and its sharpest ideological tool, anti-Semitism.

In a forthcoming issue NEW MASSES will present the reactions of a number of prominent Americans, Jews and non-Jews, to its proposal of an annual Jewish History Week. Watch for it.

This article is reprinted from the English section of the January 20 "Morning Freiheit," Yiddish labor daily.

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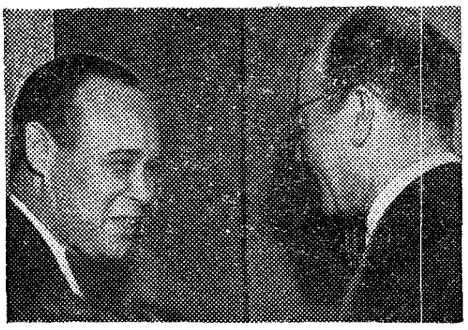

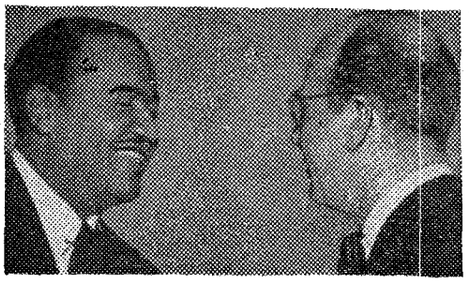

"FREEDOM is indivisible and in America can proceed only as racial minorities are fully emancipated. The democratic quality of our society can be determined only by the degree of jimcro that still exists. In consonance with its long struggle for the realization of our common rights, NEW MASSES is honored to recognize on this occasion some two score Negro and white Americans whose achievements in the arts, sciences and public life are major contributions toward greater racial understanding." With this dedication, Author Howard Fast and the NEW MASSES made awards to outstanding contributors in their respective fields. At left are shown Dr. Charles Drew, receiving his award from Howard da Sylva for his scientific achievements, and Councilman Benjamin Davis, Jr., for his militancy in public life. The dinner took place at the Hotel Commodore Monday evening, January 14, and was preceded by a cocktail party. Those attending could, in themselves, be easily considered a "Who's Who in the World of Achievement." At right, James W. Ford and Eslanda Robeson are caught in tete a tete.

CANADA LEE, for his contributions to the fields of the theatre, motion pictures, and radio, receives his award from Master of Ceremonies da Sylva (below). Bottom, Dr. Alain Locke (literary criticism), Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune (education), Dr. W. E. DuBois (history) and Howard Fast, who sponsored the awards, bear out the dedicatory message that ". . . the roster of distinguished figures at this gathering alone is a repudiation of those who by word or act defend the Hitler slogan of white supremacy. Only by the full recognition in every corner of our land of the contributions of all of America's people can we achieve the rich and abundant life within our reach." The gentlemen are toasting Dr. Bethune.

HONORED in the field of the dance was Pearl Primus, shown above chatting with Frederick V. Field, ranking official of the Pan-American Council for Democracy, and an expert on affairs of the Far East. Miss Primus holds an important spot in the current production of "Show Boat." Also honored at the dinner were Arnaud D'Usseau and James Gow, playwrights who wrote DEEP ARE THE ROOTS, and Hilda Simms, whose award was accepted by Georgia Burke.

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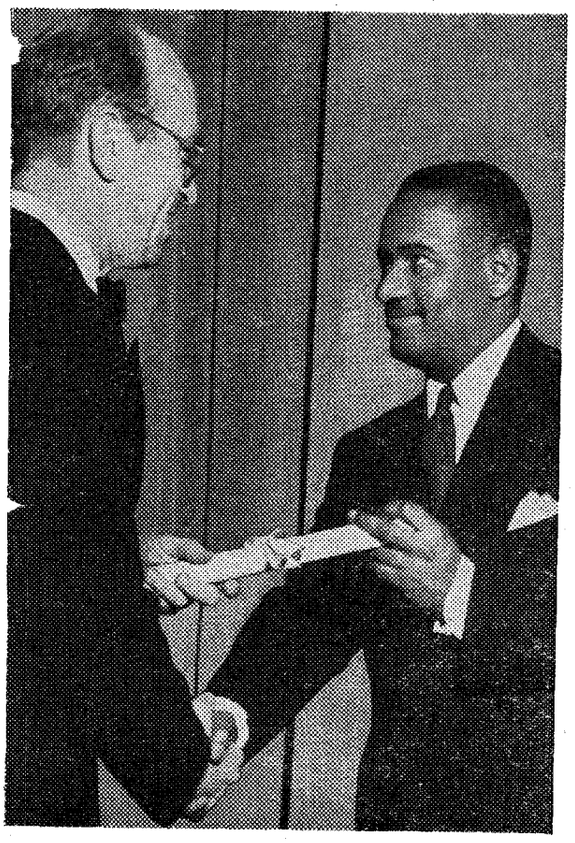
' Masses' Honors Outstanding Americans

RED ABOVE are several artists whose work with brush and
have attained universal recognition. From left to right are
Gwathmey, whose one-man show of Negro subjects is now being
ved at a 57th Street gallery; Jacob Lawrence, award recipient,
rs. Lawrence, a distinguished artist in her own right; Charles
an expert on tempera and other media, and Ernest Crichlow,
Illustrations for TWO IS A TEAM helped make it one of the
nding children's books of the year. They're exchanging frivolities
the cocktail party.

HOWARD DA SYLVA (whom you may remember as the bartender in "The *Lost Weekend*") was master of ceremonies during the distribution of awards, which were presented in a dramatic narration written by Rae Dalven. At right he's shown as he gave Duke Ellington his scroll for his unique position in the world of music. Da Sylva also accepted for Frank Sinatra, in Hollywood, an award "for his courageous fight on behalf of all minorities."



AN DIXON'S position in the music field was recognized by the
rd he received from the hands of Howard da Sylva. Among
se who could not be on hand to receive theirs were Joe Louis,
esenting the field of sports; Carlton Moss for his writing achieve-
s; Malcolm Ross, chairman of the Fair Employment Practices
ittee. Mrs. Eslanda Robeson accepted the award for her
husband, Paul.

STERLING BROWN (left above) received an award for poetry, is shown with Revels Cayton, executive secretary of the National Negro Congress, and Thelma Dale, field secretary. Brown is a professor at Howard University, on the professional staff at Vassar. Below are Ferdinand Smith, recipient of an award as labor leader and executive secretary of the National Maritime Union, chatting with Ethel Riley Clark, special Urban League field worker, and Mrs. Dorothy Spencer, wife of Kenneth Spencer, now appearing in SHOW BOAT. Affair was co-chairman'd by Howard Fast and Mrs. Robeson, is given annually.

Voice—January 26, 1946)

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READERS' FORUM

Chicago "Youth for Christ"

TO NEW MASSES: You might like to hear a few details about the Youth for Christ in Chicago. The Moody Church seats 4,000, but inasmuch as the ground floor easily accommodates the 1,500 to 2,000 who come out on Saturday nights, the balcony is roped off. The attendance is carefully watched by the Rev. Bob Cook, the director, who is also Torrey Johnson's co-pastor at Midwest Bible Church. He hardly ever misses asking, "How many are here for the first time?" They come from all over—Chicago proper, the suburbs, and, as visitors, from far distant points. As in the East, the leadership is very clever, the protracted musical program sparkling, and the "message" usually no more than fifteen minutes long. No wonder the youngsters don't like to go to church the next day! Perhaps that is at the bottom of the charge that YFC is keeping people away from their own churches.

There's another fly in the ointment. The attendance is heavily adult, only about a third being teen agers; another third is over twenty, and the last third frankly middle-aged and elderly. So now the leaders have tried another stunt. Yesterday they invaded a high school with an elaborate program, and to insure a crowd and a spirit of competition they invited another high school to participate in the "testimonies" and a Bible quiz. The six young people who took part in the quiz made a poor showing, considering the emphasis the Fundamentalists place on Bible study. This affair brought out about 1,500 people, predominantly youthful. Their pastors, about fifteen in number, were ranged on the platform, and each contributed a stereotyped "testimony." Later, as evidence that YFC encourages children to be loyal to their churches, a show of hands was asked on the question, "How many of you children have, at some definite time, said, 'Thank God for my pastor?'" Again, "How many children will promise to pray for their pastor?" The Chicago *Sun*, despite its unfriendly attitude to YFC, was nevertheless forced to comment favorably on this meeting. Hard to be honest when a regular advertiser is involved!

The children were invited to a prayer meeting to be held in the Moody Church on Sunday afternoon, March 17, for a group of youthful missionaries who leave by plane the next morning for Europe, including Russia. "And when Pete"—the young man assigned to the Bolsheviks—"gets real chummy with Joe Stalin, Joe will let us have Gospel meetings in Moscow," Mr. Cook confided to his youthful audience. I wonder if foreign missionaries are allowed in Russia, particularly the brand approved by Hearst.

This first high-school rally—ironically held in a school named after the infidel Steinmetz—proved such a success that it is planned to make it a regular monthly feature, in different schools.

Returning to the regular Saturday night rally: the short speeches, besides being snappy, are carefully censored of fascist expressions. Godless materialism is denounced, but without naming Russia or Communism. A guest speaker a few weeks ago was the director of the YFC at Washington, Pa., where Klan activity in a high school has just been reported. He ranted against evolution. "They call us back numbers," Mr. Lehman shouted scornfully, "but I'd rather be called a back number than have my ancestors hanging *from trees* by their tails!" (What Bryan said twenty years ago). A ripple of approving laughter swept through the audience, and the speaker then mopped up the scientists: "I believe in Adam; God was there and the scientists weren't."

Encouraged by the adult response to YFC, 200 Chicago churches are now cooperating in a plan for a citywide evangelistic campaign in Chicago in the spring, to run five weeks and wind up with a huge rally in Soldier Field on Memorial Day. Will they remember the Memorial Day massacre of the workers in 1937? This is the first attempt at an evangelistic campaign since Billy Sunday's in 1918.

B. C.
Chicago.

The Negro's Radicalism

TO NEW MASSES: It is with surprise rather than anger that I read what may have been a slip of the pen of Congressman Powell in his article "My Grandfather Was a Slave," NEW MASSES, Jan. 15, 1946.

"The new Negro is as radical, no more no less, than Jefferson, Clay, Webster and Tom Paine. His is not the radicalism of Marx although Marxism is respected. It is the radicalism of free men."

The implication is that Marxism is not the radicalism of free men. The implication is that Marxism is a peculiarly Russian philosophy, and not native, but alien to free American soil. The question arises if we must wait in America for fascist enslavement before Marxism will not only be respected, but practiced by the new Negro. The question arises what kind of a Negro is Congressman Powell's friend, co-worker, and co-leader of the Negro people, Ben Davis, City Councilman of New York, whom I heard deliver a fighting Communist speech to a Lenin memorial rally sponsored by the Communist Party? Since Ben Davis is a Communist, his is a different kind of radicalism described emphatically by Congressman Powell as rigidly categorizing the new Negro.

No man, not even Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., can set a mold around the whole Negro people and announce that any Negro is as radical, no more no less.

Chicago. MIKE HECHT.

Yugoslavia Starves

TO NEW MASSES: It is an irony of the peace we celebrate this year that an incomparable ally—Yugoslavia—is far closer to starvation than the German people.

Yugoslavia—which pinned down twenty Axis divisions while our North African campaign wavered between victory and defeat—eats less than 1,000 calories a day. Germany—whose contribution to the world is only too well known—has a daily diet that averages from 1,300 to 1,500 calories.

Today there is a campaign to arouse the compassion of the world—for Germany! We are told that the Germans need from 2,500 to 3,000 calories daily to stave off starvation. Is it partisan to suggest that the Yugoslavs, quite apart from being more deserving, are in far greater need of our compassion and aid?

To the hunger of Yugoslavs is added near-nakedness. Eighty percent of the people do not possess a single set of wearable clothing; eight out of ten are barefoot. In many places peasant women worked the land last autumn naked except for a loin cloth.

The American Committee for Yugoslav Relief this year shipped more than one million and a half pounds of food, medical supplies and clothing to Yugoslavia. But it is not enough. Send contributions to American Committee for Yugoslav Relief, 235 E. 11 St., N. Y. C.

Milford, N. J. LOUIS ADAMIC.

For the Aged

TO NEW MASSES: It is with regret that I forward this note without the accompanying renewal subscription, but I depend upon a Social Security allowance. Until conditions become better, with the broadening of social security as has been promised by each President, and by most of the Representatives of Congress—just before election—my subscription will of necessity be withheld, but my interest in NEW MASSES, *never*.

Any item that you may insert in your valued magazine for the advancement of the welfare of the aged citizens will be much appreciated by the General Welfare Federation, Washington, D.C.

FRANK R. HARRIS.
Monmouth, Ill.

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WHAT SHALL WE ASK OF WRITERS?

By ALBERT MALTZ

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER's frank and earnest article on writers' problems (NM, Oct. 23, 1945) is very welcome. In attempting to add to his discussion, I ask that my observations be taken for what they are: the comments of a working writer, not the presentation of a formal esthetician. It is likely that some of my statements are too sweeping, others badly formulated. I urge that the attention of readers, however, be directed to the problem itself, rather than to formulations which may be imperfect. All who are earnestly desirous of a rich, expanding literature in America have the obligation of charting the course. This common effort must not languish while we search for unassailable definitions.

It has been my conclusion for some time that much of left-wing artistic activity—both creative and critical—has been restricted, narrowed, turned away from life, sometimes made sterile—because the atmosphere and thinking of the literary left wing has been based upon a shallow approach. Let me add that the left wing has also offered a number of vital intellectual assets to the writer—such as its insistence that important writing cannot be socially idle—that it must be humane in content, etc. Schneider enumerated these assets and I take them here for granted. But right now it is essential to discuss where things have gone wrong—why and how.

I believe that the effects of the shallow approach I have mentioned—like a poison in the bloodstream—largely cause the problems Schneider mentioned. Indeed, these problems are merely the pustules upon the body, the sign of ill-health.

Let me underscore that I am referring only to artistic activity, not to journalism. Schneider differentiates generally between writing for the moment and writing enduring works. There are other ways of phrasing this distinction, but his is a useful one—provided it is not taken with mechanical literalness. For instance, certain works have been written for the moment which nevertheless prove to contain enduring values. Such examples do not alter the true meaning of Schneider's categories.

Schneider went on to state, correctly, that: ". . . to report immediate events or to propagandize for immediate objectives . . . is an honorable as well as a useful function. (John Reed . . . Ehrenburg.) The harm," he added, "is in confusing the two. Some writers have sought to solve a conflict of conscience by trying to do the two in one" (i.e., journalism and art). "They have written books in such a way as also to serve immediate political expediencies. The results showed either in weakened and schematic writing—or wasted writing."

In these remarks, Schneider recognizes the problem, describes it accurately—but does not go on to uncover the deep source of it. Left-wing writers have been confused, yes. But why?

The answer, I believe, is this: *Most* writers on the Left have been confused. "The conflict of conscience," resulting in wasted writing or bad art, *has been induced in the writer by the intellectual atmosphere of the left wing*. The errors of individual writers or critics largely flow from a central source, I believe. That source is the vulgarization of the theory of art which lies behind left-wing thinking: namely, "art is a weapon."

Let me emphasize that, properly and *broadly* interpreted, I accept this doctrine to be true. The ideas, ethical concepts, credos upon which a writer draws consciously or unconsciously are those of his period. In turn, the accepted beliefs of any period reflect those values which are satisfactory to the class holding dominant social power. To the degree that works of art reflect or attack these values, it is broadly—not always specifically—true to say that works of art have been, and can be, weapons in men's thinking, and therefore in the struggle of social classes—either on the side of humanity's progress, or on the side of reaction. But as interpreted in practice for the last fifteen years of the left wing in America, it has become a hard rock of narrow thinking. The total concept, "art is a weapon," has been viewed as though it consisted of only one word: "weapon." The *nature* of art—*how* art may best be a weapon, and how it may *not* be, has been slurred over. I have come to believe that the accepted understanding of art as a weapon is not a useful guide, but a straitjacket. I have felt this in my own work and viewed it in the works of others. In order to write at all, it has long since become necessary for me to repudiate it and abandon it.

Whatever its original stimulating utility in the late twenties or the early thirties, this doctrine—"art is a weapon"—over the years, in day-to-day wear and tear, was converted from a profound analytic, historical insight into a vulgar slogan: "art *should be* a weapon." This, in turn, was even more narrowly interpreted into the following: "art should be a weapon as a leaflet is a weapon." Finally, in practice, it has been understood to mean that *unless* art is a weapon like a leaflet, serving immediate political ends, necessities and programs, it is worthless or escapist or vicious.

The result of this abuse and misuse of a concept upon the critic's apparatus of approach has been, and must be, disastrous. From it flow all of the constrictions and—we must be honest—stupidities—too often found in the earnest but narrow thinking and practice of the literary left wing in these past years. And this has been inevitable.

First of all, under the domination of this vulgarized approach, creative works are judged *primarily* by their formal ideology. What else can happen if art is a weapon as a leaflet is a weapon? If a work, however thin or inept as a piece of literary fabric, expresses ideas that seem to fit the correct political tactics of the time, it is a foregone conclusion that it will be reviewed warmly, if not enthusiastically. But if the work, no matter how rich in human insight, character portrayal and imagination, seems to imply "wrong" political conclusions, then it will be indicted, severely mauled or beheaded—as the case may be.

LET me give a recent example of this unhappy pattern: When Lillian Hellman's magnificent play, *Watch on the Rhine*, was produced in 1940, the NEW MASSES' critic attacked it. When it appeared, *unaltered*, as a film in 1942, the NEW MASSES' critic hailed it. The changed attitude came not from the fact that two different critics were involved, but from the fact that events had transpired in the two years calling for a different political program. This work of art was not viewed on either occasion as to its real quality—its deep revelation of life, char-

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acter and the social scene—but primarily as to whether or not it was the proper "leaflet" for the moment.

There is an opposite error, corollary to this: NEW MASSES' critics have again and again praised works *as art* that no one (themselves included) would bother to read now, ten years later. In fact, it once even gave a prize to such a book. This is not due to the fact that those who have written criticism for the magazine have been personally without taste, or intelligence or integrity. The evil lies in the *abandonment* of taste because a shallow approach does not permit it. Literary taste can only operate in a crippled manner when canons of immediate political utility are the primary values of judgment to be applied indiscriminately to all books.

Again, from this type of thinking comes that approach which demands of each written work that it contain "the whole truth." An author writes a novel, let us say, about an unemployed Negro during the depression. The central character, after many harsh vicissitudes, ends by stealing and is sent to the penitentiary. If a book with this content were to be richly rendered, it might be highly illuminating in its portrayal of an aspect of Negro life in America. But, again and again I have seen such works, justifiably confined to only one sector of experience, severely criticized because they do not contain "the whole truth." Upon examination this "whole truth" reveals itself to be purely political. The narrow critic is demanding that the novelist *also* show that some unemployed Negroes join the Unemployed Councils, etc. This demand, which I have seen repeated in varied ways in the pages of the NEW MASSES, rests upon the psychological assumption that readers come to each book with an empty head. They know nothing, understand nothing. Therefore, all they will *ever* know of Negro life in America must be contained in *this* book. Therefore, if the author has omitted to say that some unemployed Negroes join organizations, it is a deficient book because it doesn't contain "the whole truth," and it doesn't properly fill the total vacuum of the reader's mind.

The creative writer, respecting this type of criticism, is faced with insuperable difficulties. He is confronted with the apparent obligation of writing both a novel and an editorial that will embrace all current political propositions remotely touching his material. Whether or not his character *would* join the Unemployed Council is of no matter; whether or not the material and artistic concept of the book forbid the examination of other characters—that, too, is of no matter. By hook or crook the material *must* be so rendered that the whole political "truth" of the scene is made visible, and the empty-headed reader is thereby won to new horizons—Q.E.D.

This is not a method by which art can be made rich, or the artist freed to do his most useful work. Let those who deny this ask working writers.

II

FROM this narrow approach to art another error also follows rather automatically. If, in actual practice (no matter how we revere art), we assume that a writer making a speech is performing the same act as writing a novel, then we are helpless to judge works written by those who make the "wrong" sort of speeches. Engels was never bothered by this problem. For instance, he said of Balzac (I paraphrase) that Balzac taught him more about the social structure of France than all of the economists, sociologists, etc., of the period. But who was Balzac? He was a Royalist, consistently and virulently anti-democratic, anti-socialist, anti-communist in his thinking *as* a citizen.

In his appreciation of Balzac, Engels understood two facts about art: First, as I have already stated, the writer, *qua* citizen, making an election speech, and the writer, *qua* artist, writing a novel, is performing two very different acts. Second, Engels understood that a writer may be confused, or even stupid and reactionary in his thinking—and yet, it is possible for him to do good, even great, work as an artist—work that even serves ends he despises. This point is critical for an understanding of art and artists! An artist can be a great artist without being an integrated or a logical or a progressive thinker on all matters. This is so because he presents, not a systematized philosophy, but the imaginative reconstruction of a *sector* of human experience. Indeed, most people do not think with thoroughgoing logic. We are all acquainted with Jews who understand the necessity of fighting fascism—but who do not see the relationship between fascism and their own discrimination toward Negroes. We know Negroes who fight discrimination against themselves, but are anti-Semitic. I am acquainted with the curator of a museum who has made distinguished contributions in his scientific field, but who sees no contradiction between his veneration for science and his racist attitude toward Negroes. Out of these same human failings, many artists are able to lead an intellectual life that often has a dual character. Ideas which they may consciously hold or reject do not always seriously affect their field of work where, operating like a scientist upon specific material, they sometimes handle an aspect of human experience with passionate honesty—in spite of the fact that the very implications of what they are writing may contradict ideas they consciously hold.

For instance, in sections of *Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck writes a veritable poem to revolution. Yet we would be making an error to draw conclusions from this about Steinbeck's personal philosophy, or to be surprised when he writes *Cannery Row* with its mystic paean to Bohemianism. Similarly, we can point to John Galsworthy, a successful, wealthy, middle-class Englishman. As a thinker, Galsworthy may not have understood the meaning of the phrase "class justice." But as an artist, honestly and earnestly recreating what he saw in English society, he wrote two plays, *The Silver Box* and *Justice*, which gave a searing portrait of class justice in human terms—and which no socially-conscious, theoretically sagacious, left-wing writer of today has come within two hundred miles of equalling.

Unless this is understood, the critics on the Left will not be able to deal with the literary work of their time. Writers must be judged by their work, and *not* by the committees they join. It is the job of the editorial section of a magazine to praise or attack citizens' committees for what they stand for. It is the job of the literary critics to appraise the literary works only.

THE best case in point—although there are many—is James T. Farrell. Farrell is, in my opinion—and I have thought so ever since reading *Studs Lonigan* over ten years ago—one of the outstanding writers in America. I have not liked all of his work equally, and I don't like the committees he belongs to. But he wrote a superb trilogy and more than a few short stories of great quality, and he is not through writing yet. *Studs Lonigan* endures and is read by increasing numbers. It will endure, in my opinion, and deserves to. But if Farrell is to be judged solely by his personality or his political position—then the NEW MASSES is left in the position of either ignoring his work or attacking it. Let's face it: Isn't this exactly what has happened? Farrell's name was a

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bright pennant in the NEW MASSES until he became hostile to the NEW MASSES. Very well; for his deeds or misdeeds as a citizen, let him be editorially appraised. But his literary work cannot be ignored, and must not be ignored. And, if Engels gave high praise to the literary work of Balzac—despite his truly vicious political position—is not this a guide to the NEW MASSES' critics in estimating the literary work of a whole host of varied writers—Farrell, Richard Wright, someone else tomorrow? What is basic to all understanding is this: There is not always a commanding relationship between the way an artist votes and any particular work he writes. *Sometimes* there is, depending upon his choice of material and the degree to which he consciously advances political concepts in his work. (Koestler, for instance, always writes with a political purpose so organic to his work that it affects his rendering of character, theme, etc. He must be judged accordingly.) But there is no inevitable, consistent connection.

Furthermore, most writers of stature have given us great works *in spite* of philosophic weaknesses in their works—Doestoyevsky, Tolstoy, Thomas Wolfe, are among many examples. All too often narrow critics recognize this fact in dealing with dead writers, but are too inflexible to accept it in living writers. As a result it has been an accepted assumption in much of left-wing literary thought that a writer who repudiates a progressive political position (leaves the intellectual orbit of NEW MASSES, let us say) *must* go downhill as a creative writer. But this is simply not true to sober fact—however true it may be in individual cases. Actually it is impossible to predict the literary future of Richard Wright at this moment. At this moment he takes political positions which seem to many to be fraught with danger for his own people. He may continue to do so. But *Black Boy*, whatever its shortcomings, is not the work of an *artist* who has gone downhill. It is to the credit of the NEW MASSES that it recognized this in dealing with the book. Equally, it is impossible to predict now the future literary achievement or failure of James Farrell, of Kenneth Fearing, of Lillian Smith—as it is of Van Tillburg Clark, of Howard Fast, of Arnold Manoff, of Michael Blankfort. Books must be weighed like new coins—in terms of what they are. No other standard is valid. Writing is a complex process, and the sources of creative inspiration, out of which an artist works, are *exceedingly* complex. There are *many, many* reasons why writers grow and sometimes retrogress. The political convictions of a writer, or his lack of political convictions, *may* have something to do with his growth or creative decline, and certainly will if he writes highly politicalized novels (Koestler). But they don't always have to do with it (Marquand—Steinbeck), and any assumption that as a writer's politics do, so inevitably does his art go —forward or backward—is the assumption of naivete.

III

I HAVE discussed a number of the general evils which seem to me to flow from the vulgarization and one-sided application of the doctrine, "Art is a Weapon." I'd like now to examine its specific effect upon creative writing.

A creative writer, accepting the aesthetic standards I have described, almost inevitably begins to narrow his approach to the rich opportunities of his art. He works intellectually in an atmosphere in which the critics, the audience, the friends he respects—while revering art—actually judge works on the basis of their immediate political utility. It is, moreover, an *urgent* social atmosphere —one of constant political crises. Almost inevitably, the earnest writer, concerned about his fellow man, aware of the social crisis, begins to think of his work as only another form of leaflet writing. Perhaps he comes to no such conscious conclusions. But he does so in effect—and he begins to use his talent for an immediate political end. If the end is good, it would be absurd to say that this may not be socially useful. It also would be highly inaccurate to maintain that from an approach like this *no* art can result. On the other hand, I believe that the failure of much left-wing talent to mature is a comment on how restricting this canon is for the creator in practice.

The reason for this does not come primarily from the fact that works written for the moment are of interest only for the moment. Sometimes, as I pointed out earlier, they prove to have enduring interest also. It goes deeper—into the way a writer views his task, into the way he views people and events. The opportunity of the artist is conditioned by the nature of art itself. We read textbooks for facts, theories, information. But we read novels, or go to the theater, for a different purpose. The artist, by the nature of his craft, is able to show us people in motion. This is why we revere good writers. They let us observe the individual richly—a complex creature of manifold dreams, desires, disappointments—in his relation to other individuals and to his society.

"The James Awakening," five impressions inspired by the current Henry James controversy, by Pvt. Frank Russell, now in the Philippines.

"His passions are a storm in a tea cup...."

"The devastation is evident throughout...."

"And it's of a ponderousness...."

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The artist is most successful who most profoundly and *accurately* reveals his characters, with all their motivations clearly delineated.

But the writer who works to serve an immediate political purpose—whose desire it is to win friends for some political action or point of view—has set himself the task not primarily of revealing men and society as they are (the social novelist)—but rather of winning a point (the political novelist). I am not saying that an artist should be without a point of view on life and society, or that his point of view does not inevitably guide his selection of materials, characters, etc., or that any book, profoundly written, will be without political implications (*The Brothers Karamazov*). But there is a difference between possessing a philosophic point of view, which permeates one's work (the social novelist), and having a tactical axe to grind *which usually requires the artificial manipulation of character* and usually results in shallow writing (the political novelist or political propagandist working in the novel).

One can gain a useful lesson by examining *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The central figure, Gregor, is a man who ends up as the political enemy of the Soviet revolution. I have always remembered a brilliant scene in the book: Gregor, who had fought with the Reds in the Civil War and then gone over to the Whites, returns to his village. He wants no more of fighting or politics. He asks only to live quietly as a farmer. But he is not allowed to remain at peace. Retribution, in the form of a Communist, catches up with him. The Communist comes to his house, listens to Gregor's earnest plea to be left alone and replies, with passion, "No, we will not leave you alone; we will hound you."

One cannot read this scene without sympathizing with Gregor and yearning for the Communist to be more tolerant. Yet—one understands both men. Their characters, history and motivations have been clearly presented. The position *each* takes is inevitable. The sympathetic insight into Gregor, the humanity of his presentation, does not, however, corrupt the historical point of view in the book. Rather, it deepens it.

The social illumination of this novel and its political meaning would not be possible with a different handling of Gregor. This is so because profound characterization presents all characters *from their own point of view*, allowing them their own full, human justification for their behavior and attitudes, yet allowing the reader to judge their objective behavior. *This is the special wisdom art can offer us.* But if Sholokhov had had a narrow political axe to grind, he would not have allowed Gregor his humanity, he would have wanted only to make the reader hate him—and so the breath of life would have gone from the book. It would have been weaker socially, psychologically, artistically *and* politically.

The pitfall of the socially conscious writer who uses his art in a shallow manner is that his goal all too often subtly demands the annihilation of certain characters, the gilding of others. It is very, very difficult for him *not* to handle characters in black and white since his objective is to prove a proposition, not to reveal men in motion as they are.

Consequently, it is more than likely that he will "angle" character and events to achieve his point. He may not wish to do this. But he is led to it by his goal—led into idealistic conceptions of character, led into wearing rose-colored glasses which will permit him to see in life that which he *wishes* to find in order to prove his thesis—led into the portrayal of life, not as it is, but as he would like it to be. And this is not only inferior art but shallow politics as well. He becomes the author of what Engels called "pinch-penny" socialist novels. This is why "the conflict of conscience," of which Schneider spoke, has resulted so often in schematic writing or wasted writing—and, in not a few instances, in a book or a play which must be discarded when a change of newspaper headlines occurs.

"But really, that Mandarin style...."

THIS latter calamity is the very symbol of the pitfall dug for the artist by his own narrow approach to his art. I know of at least a dozen plays and novels discarded in the process of writing because the political scene altered. Obviously the authors in question were not primarily bent upon portraying abiding truths, either of character or the social scene, but were mainly concerned with advancing a political tactic through the manipulation of character. Otherwise, a new headline in the newspapers would not have made them discard their work. I even know a historian who read Duclos and announced that he would have to revise completely the book he was engaged upon. But what type of history was this in the first place?

I am convinced that the work-in-progress of an artist who is deeply, truly, honestly recreating a sector of human experience, need not be affected by a change in the political weather. A journalist's work, on the other hand, usually is affected. This is not an invidious judgment on the journalist. It is merely the difference between journalism and art. When the artist misuses his art, when he practices journalism instead of art—however decent his purposes—the result is neither the best journalism, nor the best art, nor the best politics.

The great humanistic tradition of culture has always been on the side of progress. The writer who works within this tradition—offering his personal contribution to it—is writing a political work in the broadest meaning of the term. It is not also incumbent upon him that he relate his broad philosophic or emotional humanism to a current and transient political tactic.

He may do so if he wishes. That is up to him. But if he does, he must remember that, where art is a weapon, it is only so when it is art. Those artists who work within a vulgarized approach to art do so at great peril, to their own work and to the very purposes they seek to serve.

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BACKGROUND TO ERROR

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

IN NEW MASSES' discussion on American left-wing writing to which Albert Maltz contributes in this issue, one area remains dim and another has been left blank.

The dim area is that of the achievements of left-wing criticism, which are considerable in lasting effects though not in lasting works. Here I can only refer to them. They can be summed up as follows: Largely through the efforts of the left-wing critics the analysis of the social interrelationships of a work of art has been established as a standard critical procedure; and left-wing critics have succeeded in shifting the stress, in the general estimation of the artist's role, from dissociation from the community to his integration with it.

But in this article my concern is with the blank space in the picture. If it is not now filled in, the discussion will leave us with a partial and unbalanced view.

The blank space is the background. So far the discussion has been carried on as if the conditions of our left-wing criticism have been determined solely by us; as if the present development is what we had wanted, and the deficiencies are our personal deficiencies of which we are, at last, penitentially aware.

If this were so the problem would be simple. It is comparatively easy to acknowledge errors and make resolutions to reform; and it is dangerously easy to "correct" the error in the old-fashioned way of a plunge into opposite error. The hard and the necessary thing is to analyze the error, and this cannot be done without an accompanying analysis of the social context of the error. For we were not the only ones involved in it.

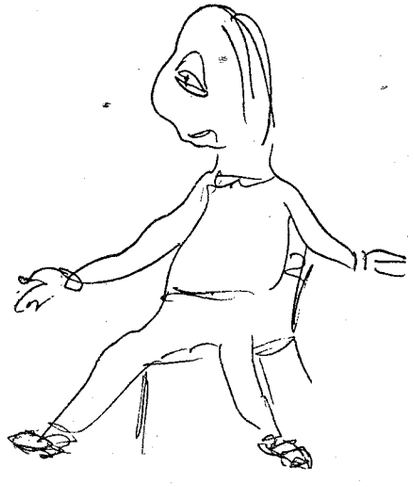
Engels, speaking of the role of the individual in history said: "History makes itself in such a way that the final result always rises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces which give rise to one result —the historical event. This again may itself be viewed as the product of a power which, taken as a whole, works *unconsciously* and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. . . . Each contributes to the resultant and is to this degree involved in it."

The resultant of the struggle, now fourteen years old, for an American Marxist criticism is certainly not what I had willed, or any left-wing critic had willed. But, if we understand what has occurred we may, in the coming stages of the struggle, bring about effects closer to our will.

II

THE recent and, historically, most important phase in American left-wing criticism began, so far as such a sweeping movement can be exactly dated, with the participation of a large group of writers in the campaign of the Communist Party candidates in the 1932 presidential elections. Thus this literary movement opened with a political act, and a pragmatic pattern was set for its subsequent activities.

It seemed natural then to organize groups of writers for political action and postpone such activities as founding Marxist literary magazines. Today, with very few left-wing organs exerting any authoritative influence in American culture, we may question the validity of that emphasis: It also seemed more important, then, for writers to concern themselves with immediate political emergencies than to elaborate a Marxist critique. Today we wish that their objectives had had a further range.



For three or four years, roughly corresponding to the years of the New Deal advance, the literary left wing was on the offensive. Had its victories held, had it been allowed space and time to develop, it would undoubtedly have grown out of its emergency-mindedness. But it was not given the time. It became one of the first victims of the years of reactionary counter-offensive which in the 1936 Presidential campaign sent the New Deal into retreat. Then followed the immobilizing of the Left during the late hush-hush, when our criticism, suddenly confronted with sacred cows on every side, stood still.

Hostile critics like Alfred Kazin picture the period of the left-wing offensive as a domination which the Left lost through ineptitude. But the "domination" extended to nothing more than a brief hospitality in the pages of *The New Republic;* occasional, begrudged toleration of a Marxist voice in other journals; and a brief speculation by book publishers on "proletarian" fiction. This small inroad was overestimated by the Left as well. Perhaps because of it, on the assumption that bourgeois publishing houses and magazines would always be available, and more important to us anyway, we neglected the opportunity —and task—of building an effective publications apparatus of our own.

Actually these inroads were of less consequence than the gains in the WPA cultural projects. The fields here were open to talent and energy. And it proved to be the Left that had the talent and energy. All critics are agreed that the projects contributed enormously to American culture and that had their development been continuous and free, they could have nurtured a mature American theater, music, art and literature.

But the situation of the projects was

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BLACK METROPOLIS

by St. Clair Drake & Horace R. Cayton
INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD WRIGHT

Charts, diagrams, index, 809 pages, $5.00

ever precarious. They lived on congressional sufferance, and were the targets of capitalist pressure groups. Immediate political struggle was the condition of their existence. They were Red-baited, in some cases, into impotence; they were slowly starved out and finally killed.

Thus a conditioning of political emergency characterized every stage of the development of the cultural Left. It is for that reason that the achievements of left criticism are to be found not in the esthetic but the social dialectic of art.

The emergency-mindedness in Left culture was intensified during the reactionary counter-offensive. One of its first effects was the stream of defections from the entire progressive front, with those from the Left being the most publicized. Analysis would show that the Communists and their immediate allies held together better than any other sector of the line, but it was to the interest of the reaction to focus attention on the Communists to give the impression that the very core of radicalism was cracking.

In direct ways, as by the Dies and the other un-American committees, and by Hearst and Roy Howard, the renegades were put to use as stools against their former comrades. As editorial doors were shut to the Left, restricting it to its own starved press, these kept renegades "put the finger" on Left teachers and other professionals and brought about their dismissal from their positions. Thus Left intellectuals were not only denied access to the general press, including, with meager exceptions, the liberal periodicals, but, through fear for their livelihoods, they were denied access even to the Left press. We have the amazing spectacle of an American democracy that, while it condescendingly lectures the rest of the world on this theme, effectively denies an important intellectual minority freedom of expression—as it does to racial minorities. This has had a destructive effect not alone on the Left. Since recent creative impulses have come mainly from the Left the blight has spread over the entire intellectual life of the country. The situation somewhat resembles that of Pilsudski's Poland under the "cold pogrom."

In addition renegades were called into capitalist cultural institutions as a sort of ideological shock troops against the Left. The resulting special polemics tended to rarify our political discussions, withdrawing it from the earth of American political life, while at the same time heightening the tensions and keeping our cultural work in the instability of emergency thinking.

Then came the overriding emergency of war.

III

As we enter the postwar stage of our struggle can we expect things to become simpler for us? The answer is *no* if we continue on the old terms. Reaction certainly will not voluntarily allow life to become easier for us. And should the labor movement attain greater unity and wrest the initiative from reaction, our tasks will multiply along with our opportunities. We shall be as submerged as ever in emergency.

But the answer can be *yes* if we make a wise use of our fourteen years of experience. For we can so redirect our course and reallot our energies as to make sure that we are not again left without the reserves and the strong points to be secured by, among other things, works of permanent standing, and a Marxist critical structure of compelling authority.

This does not mean, of course, what I referred to above as the plunge into opposite error, any abstraction from the struggle. It means for writers to make themselves formidable *as writers*, to train themselves for their part in the class struggle *as writers*, to perfect the *literary* weapons of the struggle.

Through failing to do so before, through being stampeded by every emergency, we suffered a continuous wastage of talent and energy. It has been in the power of the enemy to provoke emergencies. By reacting to everything we have allowed him to dictate the terms of our cultural struggle. How much this has been conscious strategy on his part it would be difficult to say. But, conscious or not, the provocations have had the effect of exhausting our energies and keeping us in confusion.

Let us take it for granted that the enemy, of his own volition, will not allow time for a normal, full, unfrustrated development of the Left. Let us take it for granted that none of his facilities, except occasionally and then for motives of his own, will be at the disposal of the Left. Let us never again mistake exceptions, such as a few progressive books among thousands, or a few clear voices in the radio babel, etc., as "trends."

As it looks to me a program for a Left culture that will favor a development closer to our wills should include:

1. A campaign to restore citizenship

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to intellectuals of the Left. To prepare this campaign we must first ourselves be aware how, bit by bit, we have been stripped of our civil rights until we ourselves react not against the repression itself but against accusations of Communism, as if that were the injury. If we become militantly aware of this we will recognize the principal cause of our difficulties and not censure our gasping but strike at the strangling hand. For example, court action, where feasible, should immediately be taken to reinstate teachers and other professionals who have been deprived of their jobs. In this we can count on the backing of labor and liberals. Such a campagn will do more to hearten the fearful than moral exhortations. With the confidence of organized action and support, the silent will soon declare themselves and there will be brought back into function a host of able and fertile minds whom the "cold pogrom" has kept inert.

2. The Left should undertake a wider range of book publication than it has in the past and a wider range of magazine publication. It should work toward establishing a theater, and even a cinema of its own. That is, so far as possible, it should create its own cultural facilities. For, let us finally realize, the existing facilities are in the control of the enemy, however varying the degrees of his consciousness of that control. Such opportunities as we have to use these facilities we should take full advantage of but without the illusion that they are ours except by temporary sufferance, and that we can ever afford to drop our own.

3. The emergency-mindedness and crude political determinism of the past should be abandoned in our writing and particularly in our criticism. We should have a longer range for our work. It is not out of a criticism serving tactical needs but out of a criticism serving basic needs that basic principles can be developed. Such writing will bring to our hands better weapons to meet emergencies than any of the improvisations we have devised.

4. Finally, in our day-to-day reviewing, we should avoid the mistakes so clearly shown by Maltz and touched on in my article. These mistakes are the results of a confusion of standards. The first confusion has been in elevating political tactics into political principles. This has led us into judgments that were disproportionate or, in the light of later tactics, wrong. The second confusion has been to stretch the artistic valuation to cover the political valuation. As a device, conscious or unconscious, to induce people to buy books for which we desire a large circulation, this fails, in the long run—for readers develop defenses against it. If a work has important political values these values should and can be made so exciting and pressing that readers are drawn to it for them alone. To ascribe values that are not there is merely to impose unnecessary disappointments upon the reader. Our readers were indulgent to us when we did this for they themselves recognized our motives, but they gave a qualified attention to our judgments. It will be better for us all if our readers do not find it necessary to make qualifications. And when our judgments are free from such confusions of values, they will gain the authority that can extend our influence.

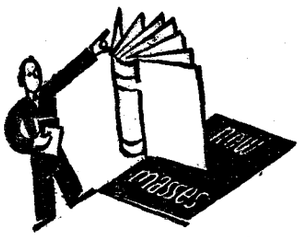
Remembering Slavery

LAY MY BURDEN DOWN, *edited by B. A. Botkin. University of Chicago Press. $3.50.*

CERTAINLY no other segment of our history has been more distorted, or ignored for that matter, than that which concerns the American Negro. Written for the most part by historians who were apologists for the South, a legend has been created which has become so much a part of our thinking that few of us even bother to challenge it. A handful of historians like Carter G. Woodson, Henrietta Buckmaster, and recently Herbert Aptheker* are the only names that come readily to mind. This legend, that slavery was a benevolent institution and the slave, while not welcoming bondage, was happy and docile in servitude, has been the basis for one of the best selling novels of all time—*Gone With the Wind;* it has also, in the case of the historians mentioned above, been sharply debunked as mere myth. On the surface the truth might seem to be found in *Lay My Burden Down,* a collection of reminiscences of ex-slaves, ably edited by B. A. Botkin, Fellow of the Library of Congress in Folklore.

Yet such is not the case and I am sure that Mr. Botkin, who has wisely subtitled his collection "A Folk History of Slavery," would be the first to object if it were so interpreted. Within the limitations he has imposed it makes a valuable contribution to our store of knowledge of slavery times and the partial emancipation which followed. It is rich in folk humor and imaginative thought processes, and of old people

* ESSAYS IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO. *International Publishers. $2.*



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sitting in the sun and remembering back into the past, which is quite another thing from the actualities of slavery or freedom. And if some of these men and women remember slavery without rancor and as differing little from the disenfranchised life in the South which followed, think of their masters and particularly their mistresses with a measure of affection, and recall the Union soldier as an invader, rather than a liberator, it is of little historical importance. For there are also those who remember it as a time of misery, exhibit toward their one-time masters a bitter hatred, and looked upon the Northern armies as coming to set them free. Nor will those who think in terms of the legend find much here to substantiate their contention that since the slave was a valuable piece of property no sensible man would mistreat him. Throughout almost every narrative runs the bitter memory of some instance when the lash was used. Even those who speak of their masters with affection will suddenly recall a whipping and biting anger will suddenly seep into their voices. Nor do many remember the early days of freedom with any feeling of joy; in almost every instance there is the acid memory of the Klan, or of a white master who withheld from his slaves, long after the war's end, the fact that there had been a proclamation freeing them. If there is some guarded acceptance here, there is also resentful protest and a militant rebellion.

This might, I think, be more noticeable were it not for three factors. In the first place this material, first gathered by a Writer's Project of the WPA, was limited in source to the Southern states, and we know that thousands of slaves fled northward, before, during and after the Civil War. Those who escaped were the more militant; those who remained behind were likely to be the less adventurous and timid. Again, in boiling down the original material from 10,000 to 500 or 600 manuscript pages Mr. Botkin, in his own words, was "concentrating on its broadly human and imaginative aspects . . . its oral, literary and folk values . . . in order to give pattern to the book and to slavery." And last of all, on page 267, one of the men interviewed says, "Lots of old slaves closes their doors before they tell the truth about their days of slavery. When the door is open, they tell how kind their masters was and how rosy it was. You can't blame them for this, because they had plenty of discipline making them cautious about saying anything uncomplimentary about their masters. I can tell you the life of the average slave was not rosy." To anyone who has lived or spent any time in the South this seems, if anything, an understatement.

It seems to this reviewer that within folk areas Mr. Botkin shows real creative editorial judgment, for the results are exciting reading and have the feeling of a whole, rather than a disjointed series of parts. Merely to present these in a form that will reach a wide audience is a step forward.

But I would heartily suggest a reading of Aptheker either before or after Mr. Botkin's folksay, to place it in its proper perspective. If Aptheker says that the message of Abolition created havoc in the South, it does not necessarily follow that it reached all areas. Negroes were militantly against slavery, for the most part, but the very nature of the institution made it hard for slaves to present a united front. The area to be reached was large and often isolated. It is certain that there were large areas where such propaganda effectively reached its mark; it is also probable that there were a minority of Negroes on whom it had little effect. And likewise there were a minority of Negroes who, through better treatment, the easier status of house servant, or the hope of freedom, betrayed their own kind. We know that most of the 250 recorded rebellions that Aptheker mentions which were broken up before they had a chance to flare into action were betrayed by house servants; but we also know that a large number of free Negroes were active in the fight against slavery, exposing themselves without regard to personal danger, either execution or the possibility of being sold back into slavery. There is ample proof in *Lay My Burden Down* to give credence and meaning to Aptheker's fight against the distortion of history. A reading of both books will give a deeper understanding of the true backgrounds of one-tenth of our nation.

BUCKLIN MOON.

Renaissance Society

SOCIOLOGY OF THE RENAISSANCE, *by Alfred Von Martin. Oxford $2.50.*

THE Renaissance collapsed in Italy, after three centuries of magnificent creation, but as it underwent national transformations in England, Holland, Germany and France, it remained a living and continuously developing part of the modern mind. Exploring the reasons for its decline in the land of its original growth provides one of the most

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convincing revelations of economic influences upon thought and art.

Renaissance Italy was not only the home of some men of great genius; it was the center of a thriving cultural life, in which masters had the forms within which to do epic work, and lesser men helpful standards of high taste. The reasons for this culture are many, and interlinked among them are the position of Italy as a trade center between Europe and the East; the resulting wealth of the Italian cities; the search for new values that led to the rediscovery of classical art and philosophy and the resulting scepticism toward medieval dogmas, social and theological; and the presence, as patrons of the arts, of men of wealth and fine taste. All flowed from the fact that Italy was the scene of the rise of capitalism in Europe.

It was capitalism in its early stage, its fortunes built up by banking, trade and small manufacture. But it brought a new class to power. Renaissance cultural achievement paralleled the rise of this class of bankers, manufacturers and merchants, and its collapse resulted from the failure of this class to carry on the social changes it had begun.

The study of the Italian Renaissance as the coming of capitalism to Italy is the thesis of this short but brilliant book, an expansion of an essay originally written for a German Encyclopaedia of Sociology in 1932. It describes first the "new dynamic" that rose in society, the possession of money as a power equal to and greater than the possession of land. The moneyed city came to dominate the feudal country. Within the city the middle class, under the standard of democracy, struggled successfully for power against the nobility.

This "democracy," as the author points out, excluded the peasantry, the city workers, the artisans and lower middle classes. Its achievement was that it broke down feudal distinctions of rank and birth, so that, as one Renaissance writer exaggerated it, "a servant may easily become a king." The new class, rising to power, encouraged changes in theology, science and the arts. "The small artisan had an intimate and almost overfamiliar attitude to God. The great bourgeois, on the other hand, faced him as a business partner." Not only was the leadership of the Church in secular affairs thrown off, but the Church itself embraced the new economics in managing its own affairs. Science brought understanding of the laws of nature, making them available as tools. Learning was encouraged, helping break the ties to medieval thought and therefore to feudal society, expressing "a desire for freedom, a loosening of all ties and a horror of everything that might again bind the individual and assign to him a strictly defined place." Art took up this scientific and moral rediscovery of the world, expressing "a new consciousness of its power and freedom which, based entirely upon the personal forces and power of the individual, became possible only in a bourgeois world."

The second part of the book takes up what the author calls "The Curve of Development," essentially the story of the failure of the Renaissance capitalists to carry out the social and political changes they had initiated. "Given a guarantee of social and economic predominance, the *haut bourgeoisie* was ready to come to terms with the new absolutist states [outside of Italy] and even to sacrifice its democratic republican institutions, which after all had never been more than a decent veil for plutocracy. It was giving up the fight for its own political future in order to enjoy the comforts of an imposed peace guaranteed by superior power." The men of wealth who had fought their way to power enlarged the abyss that separated them from the lower middle class and workers, allied themselves with the feudal nobility, assuming titles of nobility themselves.

What followed was disaster to the economic growth, national existence, science and culture of Italy. The "driving force" of the early Renaissance was dissipated. Learning and art, which had flourished under the early impetus towards freedom, and had been critical of the methods and morals of the middle class, now were set the conditions that they further cut themselves off from people, and become adornments of "the rustic calm of the villa," in an "art for art's sake" esthetic.

The author's application of his thesis to Renaissance art, while always illuminating, is sometimes in error. The analysis of art in terms of its connection to its "ruling class" is a useful instrument, but must be handled delicately, and with an understanding of art as well as economics. In showing the relation of science to Italian art, he mentions the brilliant Florentine study of mathematical perspective. This is a true insight with regard to men like Uccello and Piero della Francesca. But to go on: "For this reason, perspective remained linear in Italian art and did not express itself in atmosphere as well, as in Dutch painting," is to go to excess.

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For Massaccio, Leonardo, Titian and Tintoretto, among others, were masters of atmospheric perspective, as part of their investigation of the real world.

He says of Giotto, "in his hands art assumed a bourgeois character," and that instead of the "profoundly religious attitude" of Cimabue, he took the course of "simply representing religious subjects." The truth is that Giotto was one of the most deeply religious of artists. It would help the author's thesis, rather than hinder it, to note that Giotto, at the opening of the Renaissance, was deeply influenced by St. Francis, and by the democratizing and humanizing of religion of that earlier period, when the middle class was fighting in the name of democracy against the nobility.

The author's description of the cutting off of art from life that took place towards the end of the Renaissance is likewise a true insight, but far too sweepingly generalized. "Reality now began to appear vulgar and was admitted only in order to be brought to a higher level and perfected to a Platonic idea. . . . The earlier bourgeois realism . . . had now to be raised to the refined forms of a style of perfect harmony." This is true of Raphael and the "academy" that developed. It is not true of contemporaries like Titian, whose realism, in terms of character study, became more searching, his emotions more anguished as he saw Italian freedom being drowned by Spanish reaction; of Michelangelo, who spoke in burning, prophetic terms, challenging the morality of his times; of Leonardo, who offered the ruling class a scientific thought they had become incapable of absorbing.

One may also question the author's characterization of Machiavelli, who saw Italy's danger clearly as a "proto-fascist," or his comparison of Machiavelli's appeal for a unified Italy to the "Third Reich." Unification would have enabled Italy to defend itself from the invasion that came first from France, and then Spain; it was a necessity for the further growth of Italian industry, democracy and culture. Even under an absolute monarchy, as England and France were then, a united Italy would have served its people better than an Italy feudal-ridden internally and partitioned by foreign despots. We can see clearly, however, from the author's analysis of the mentality of the ruling powers of the later Renaissance, why they ignored the task Machiavelli set them, and thus disarmed the country before its enemies.

This book, succinctly written and analytic rather than historical in its approach, is not easy reading. It requires a pre-knowledge of the history of Italy during the Renaissance and of the differing conditions in cities like Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples, which the author ignores as not essential to his argument. But it is a masterly analysis of Renaissance society, of the rise of capitalism, and of the early capitalist mind, and a necessary supplement to standard treatises like those of Burckhardt and Symonds.

S. FINKELSTEIN.

Are the Jews a People?

THE JEWISH DILEMMA, *by Elmer Berger. Devin-Adair. $3.*

RABBI BERGER has set himself the task of convincing American Jewry, and the world at large, that Jews have in common only certain similarities of religious belief and practice, and that there is no such thing as a Jewish people. Six million Jews have been murdered as Jews and an almost world-wide anti-Semitism menaces them as Jews—and Rabbi Berger seeks to bemuse them with arguments that there is no Jewish people!

We can agree with Rabbi Berger that the Jewish communities of the Soviet Union and of the United States "demonstrates that the answer to the Jewish problem is a society of real equality and integration"; but not with his conclusion that such equality and integration can come about only through the Jew disclaiming anything in common with his fellow-Jew except religion.

The contradiction in Rabbi Berger's thesis that "men are only Jews if, however minutely, they acknowledge Judaism as their religion; if they do not, they are not Jews," is unwittingly set forth in his section on the Soviet Jews. At the same time that he writes of "the more than 3,000,000 Jews of the Soviet Union," he says that there is at present "little active religious life among Soviet Jews." If there is only a small religious group among Soviet Jews, how can Rabbi Berger, by his own definition, classify the others as Jews? He brushes aside the Soviet recognition of the Jews as a "people," implicit in their national status, by stating that it merely "reflects the same status for Soviet Jews as a term such as 'Americans of Jewish faith' connotes for American Jews." Were this true there would not be Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality; there would only be "Russians of the Jewish faith," "Ukrainians of the Jew-

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ish faith," "Byelorussians of the Jewish faith," etc.

Rabbi Berger's chief target is the world Zionist movement. While one can agree with him that the Zionist demand for a Jewish State in Palestine is unwise, his charge that Zionism is "the most divisive force" in the lives of the Jews, and that the Zionist movement in the United States prevents the integration of Jews into American life, is false and harmful. His stand that in order to be a good American a Jew must shun all ties that would link him with Jews in other countries and leave Jews open to the "accusation" that there is in existence a Jewish people, is as foolish as it is heartless. Rabbi Berger's thesis forces him to counsel the miserable surviving Jews of Europe (outside of Britain and the Soviet Union) to "reject any blanket attempt to lump all distressed Jews together as a separate people, and every solution that denies equality to Jews, however much it may give them privileges as a separate group."

Rabbi Berger's book will please few Jews—or progressive non-Jews, for that matter—aside from the members of the American Council for Judaism, of which he is the executive director, and whose founder and president is Lessing J. Rosenwald, late of America First.

Stripped of its pious phrases, the Council's program, for which Rabbi Berger is the spokesman, is one of seeking equality for Jews not by combatting the forces that would deprive Jews of their rights, but by denying the Jews' own individuality, and thereby appeasing those forces.

MARTIN TRAINOR.

Worth Noting

RoKo GALLERY, 51 Greenwich Ave., New York, will observe Negro History Week with an exhibition of representative paintings and sculpture, opening at 7:30 on Sunday evening, February 10. Negro artists, as well as others who have done creative work based upon the accomplishments and problems of the Negro, are cooperating in making this a revealing and informative art exhibition. Among those exhibiting are Jacob Lawrence, Charles White, Robert Gwathmey, Tromka, Elizabeth Catlett, Leon Kroll, Lena Gurr, Fletcher Martin. A feature of the opening night, on which Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois will be honored, will be a benefit sale for the George Washington Carver School. The Greenwich Village Art Center, the ACA and AAA Galleries are cooperating.

DECLARING that "the development and expansion of art in America is directly dependent upon the economic health and well-being of the people," a resolution by the Art Division of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions supports labor in the present strike situation. The resolution was passed unanimously at a forum on art and politics attended by more than five hundred artists and held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

THE most important French literary prize, the Prix Goncourt, has been awarded to Jean-Louis Bory, a writer still in his twenties and the youngest to receive the prize. The novel for which he received the award, *My Village on German Time*, is a story of the resistance movement.

QUENTIN REYNOLDS, the noted war correspondent, will soon begin a new series of broadcasts over Mutual Network, on Sundays, 6:45 to 7 PM. Each broadcast will be a dramatic presentation of one of the important issues facing the country.

FILMS

THE singing commercial of the radio is small potatoes compared with the technicolor commercial of the movies. Merchandising is an adjunct of the radio program; in the movie it is coming to be the program itself. There is *Billy Rose's Diamond Horse Shoe*, and *The Stork Club;* and now, most blatant of all, *The Harvey Girls* (Capitol). I remember when Studebaker, Chrysler and the others used to distribute short subjects on disinterested themes like sports, road-building, etc., during which they sneaked over a label or two. But public objection got these "sponsored" films booted off the programs.

Without the Harvey Girls, according to MGM, the West would never have been settled. Without them, travellers would have been forced to eat their steak in places with b-a-r-s. In contrast to the wicked saloon gals, the Harvey maidens behave like upper-class boarding house students. They sing prettily

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and dance only the waltz, and that under proper matronage. The Santa Fe railroad, which carried them from place to place, teams up with Mr. Harvey to catch some of the gravy. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe theme song boasts that it is a treat to stand on your feet all day when you work for the A. T. and Santa Fe.

There is nothing so vulgar, of course, as the actual working conditions of the Harvey waitresses, the miserable shacks in which they were quartered, the long, long work day. Instead the technicolor flowers bloom day *and* night to intensify the ecstasy of waiting on table. No less than five writers and one special dialogue writer had to be pulled in to make the mess palatable.

"SIX P.M." (Stanley) gets its title from the wartime date men and women made in Moscow to meet at "6 PM after the war." In form the picture is an unpretentious operetta with lots of fine music and first-rate individual and ensemble singing. Apart from the music, the virtue of the Soviet musical is that a chorus made up of apartment house tenants look the part.

Even in the Soviet versions, however, operetta conventions have no regard for realism. A supply train desperately needed at the front holds up its run while members of the crew stop to sing. A troop of artillery officers, holding the front at Moscow, take time off for a musical wooing of a squad of women digging defense ditches.

One drawback of the film is the lack of titles translating the lines of the songs. Since so much footage is taken up with dramatic singing, the songs serve as dialogue. Only once, during the stirring "Arise, Defenders of Moscow," was this done at all. Another irritant is the overlong footage devoted to the establishment of locale. I do not know whether this is because of faulty cutting, or the need to stretch the film due to American editing.

"REPUTATION" (Strand) is one of those moral think-pieces sometimes produced to prove that Hollywood can also be serious. A widow with two sons faces a nervous breakdown because she is lonely. Should she defy her friends and their conventions and violate the memory of her late husband by seeking out the company of MEN? The problem is brought to its crisis by the appearance of a playboy who is really solid stuff underneath. Knowing that in the wings wait the Legion of Decency, the Hays—pardon, the John-

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son—office, the Watch and Ward Society, etc., the outcome is properly steak and ice cream.

I HAVE not yet seen *Because of Him, Pardon My Past, People Are Funny, Up Goes Maisie, Leave Her to Heaven.* It looks like a long, long winter.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

Music

IGOR STRAVINSKY conducted his new *Symphony in Three Movements* at the New York Philharmonic concert of January 24. In my opinion, this is Stravinsky's most important work in many years; that is to say, it has much of the strength and originality that were his before he involved himself in a hopeless and sterile neo-classicism. A single hearing of a complex new work is insufficient basis for a conclusive judgment; but I would say that here Stravinsky seems at last to have made the attempt to come to grips once more with the contemporary world.

I say this despite my disagreement with the fatuous and presumptuous note which the composer permitted "his friend and associate," Ingolf Dahl, to publish relative to this symphony, and in which the latter compares this work to Picasso's "Guernica." The fat pastures of Hollywood (with the composer's "little white house in the Hollywood hills") have never been too close to the stained battlegrounds of Spain; and Mr. Stravinsky is no Picasso, when it comes to real fighting.

Nevertheless, the symphony does reflect a sense of the present. It is a massive, powerful composition, which moves with assurance and economy in unfolding its themes. Mere ornament is reduced to a minimum; at times the sparseness is almost astonishing. The mood of the whole is subdued and serious. The work suggests in its three movements a kind of autobiographic progression from the *Sacre du Printemps* (of which there are reminiscences in the first section), through the classical phase in the second movement (light and frivolous snatches recall the eighteenth century), and finally to the magnificent and sweeping conclusion. It is here that Stravinsky manifests his wonderful economy and orchestral virtuosity. But all this is combined with an emotional intensity and depth which, though more solemn and less affirmative than one would wish, provide a profound emotional and esthetic experience.

FREDERIC EWEN.

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New Masses and the Middle Class...

YOU know about the strikes on the American scene. You know that primarily they are struggles of the working class. But do you know how they differ from those that have gone before? Do you realize the active participation of the middle class? That is why Richard O. Boyer's article in NEW MASSES for February 5 was a real eye-opener.

BOYER'S article is only the beginning—in issues to come NM will describe fully, in spot coverage reports, not only the news, but its significance and interpretation. And you can't get it elsewhere.

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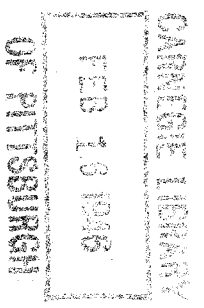

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